

Bob Becking

# From David to Gedaliah

The Book of Kings  
as Story and History

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## Preface

The Dutch noun ‘geschiedenis’ can – just like German ‘Geschichte’ – be rendered into English as both ‘story’ and ‘history’. This small linguistic observation sets the scene for this book. The Book of Kings has traditionally been read as a history, i.e. as a description of what happened in ancient Israel in the period between David and Gedaliah. As such it has been taken as a source of information on events in Iron Age Israel. Modern critical scholarship has distorted this view. There is, however, no consensus as to the degree of distortion. Some scholars accept that details in the Book of Kings can be construed as historically trustworthy. Others take the Book of Kings for a late, even Hellenistic, invention.

A recent trend in Biblical scholarship takes its starting point in construing the narratives in the Book of Kings first and foremost as stories that should be valued for their literary qualities and their being the vessel of a theological message or a religious worldview.

These two polarities can be summarized in the following phrase of Walter Dietrich: “One would read these biblical books primarily in two ways: *either biblicistically* as instructional and factual reports on the history of the people of God *or in an enlightened way* as devotional and inspirational stories of Jewish writers on the fictionally constructed ‘history of Israel’.”<sup>1</sup>

The ten essays in this volume are based on the following methodological assumptions: The Book of Kings narrates the story of Israel and Judah between David and Gedaliah, or to say the same in other words: from before the building of the temple in Jerusalem until after its destruction. Its authors should be seen as historians. This does, however, not imply that they are presenting a reconstruction of what really happened, although it should be presumed that they believed that their story related what really happened. On the other hand it should be noted that the history-writing of the authors of the Book of Kings has taken the form of a narrative. As such, it is an organization of the past and not a mere description of it. It is apparent that the authors have collected and selected events known to them, either orally or written, and that they moulded their material into the form now known to us. In doing so they have been steered by a certain belief system while trying to persuade their readers of the validity of that belief system.

This implies that in reading the Book of Kings – or sections from it – a few things need to be taken into account:

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<sup>1</sup> W. Dietrich, ‘Martin Noth and the Future of the Deuteronomistic History’, in: S. L. McKenzie, M. P. Graham (eds.), *The History of Israel’s Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth* (JSOT Sup 182), Sheffield 1994, 153-75; the quotation is from p. 153.

- the narrative character of the story/stories;
- the value and function of extra-biblical material, be it of an epigraphical or an archaeological character;
- the art of history-writing both ancient and modern.

All chapters in this volume are written on the basis of this multi-dimensional matrix. They have been published earlier in journals and multi-author volumes. Some pieces have been updated while others are merely reproduced as can be seen from the outline on the following page.

There are many persons whom I need to thank. First of all Christoph Uehlinger who hinted me at the possibility of publishing these essays in the renowned series *Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* and for his patience with a slow deliverer. My fellow members in the European Seminar for Historical Methodology – a unique initiative of Lester L. Grabbe – have helped me much in understanding the character of history-writing. Next to Lester, I would especially thank Rainer Albertz, Hans M. Barstad and Niels Peter Lemche for sharing with me their insights. Gary Knoppers carefully read my manuscript and saved me from a series of serious flaws in the English of this book. I am responsible for all remaining errors. My colleagues in the Utrecht research group for Old Testament studies – Panc C. Beentjes, Meindert Dijkstra, Marjo Korpel, Karel Vriezen and Jan A. Wagenaar – have been of great help over the years, not only by hinting me at publications and peculiarities but also by shaping a friendly and loyal atmosphere for doing research. Finally, I would like to thank our son Guus for his help in matters of computers and word processing and our daughter Anne for her nice observations mostly of a philosophical character. Without the support of my wife Maja, this book would not have been written.

*Woerden, Easter 2007*  
*Bob Becking*



## References to previous publications

- I A translation of 'Is de Hebreeuwse Bijbel een hellenistisch boek?', *NedTT* 54 (2000), 1-17; combined with "'Until this Day". On an Adverbial Adjunct and Biblical Historiography', in: M. Möller, Th. L. Thompson (eds.), *Historie og Konstruktion: Festkrift til Niels Peter Lemche i anledning af 60 års fødselsdagen den 6. September 2005* (Forum for Bibelsk Exegese 14), København 2005, 19-29.
- II An updated translation of 'Elia op de Horeb', *NedTT* 41 (1987), 177-86.
- III 'No More Grapes from the Vineyard? A Plea for a Historical-Critical Approach in the Study of the Old Testament', in: A. Lemaire, M. Sæbø (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo, 1998* (VTSup 80), Leiden 2000, 123-41.
- IV An update of 'Did Jehu write the Tel Dan Inscription?', *SJOT* 13 (1999), 187-201.
- V "'Touch for Health". Magic in 2 Kings 4:31-37 with a Remark on the History of Yahwism', *ZAW* 108 (1996), 34-54.
- VI 'From Exodus to Exile: 2 Kings 17:7-20 in the Context of its Co-Text', in: G. Galil, M. Weinfeld (eds.), *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai* (VTSup 81), Leiden 2000, 215-231.
- VII 'From Apostasy to Destruction: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria', in: M. Vervenne, J. Lust (eds.), *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature: Festschrift C. H. W. Brekelmans* (BETHL 133), Leuven 1997, 279-97.
- VIII 'Chronology: A Skeleton without Flesh? Sennacherib's Campaign as a Case-Study', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *'Like a Bird in a Cage': The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE* (ESHM 4; JSOT Sup 363), Sheffield 2003, 46-72.
- IX A patchwork of 'Baalis, the King of the Ammonites. An Epigraphical Remark on Jeremiah 40:14', *JSS* 38 (1993), 15-24; 'Inscribed Seals as Historical Sources for 'Ancient Israel'? Jeremiah 40.7-41.15 *par exemple*', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 65-83, and 'The Seal of Baalisha, King of the Ammonites: Some Remarks', *BN* 97 (1999), 13-17.
- X An update of 'Jehojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Remarks on 2 Kings 25,27-30', in: C. Brekelmans, J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989* (BETHL 94), Leuven 1990, 283-93.



## Chapter I: Is the Book of Kings a Hellenistic Book?\*

### *1. What is the problem?*

One of the outcomes of the influence of Enlightenment thinking on biblical studies is the unchaining of the traditional cord between the Divine and the Text leading to the acceptance that the Hebrew Bible is just a book that emerged in the human dimensions of history. The Hebrew Bible should be accepted as a text mirroring in its various ways the life and times of an ancient culture. This acceptance unavoidably leads to discussions about authorship and dating. Or phrased otherwise, when was which text written and by whom? Within the field of Old Testament scholarship this discussion seems to be endless as well as repetitious. It is not my aim to outline here this discussion – or these discussions – in its entirety including all details. What I would like to do is to pay attention to a new trend that, although basically applying the same critical methods, is deviating from what can be labelled as ‘mainstream Old Testament scholarship’.

An incidental problem is formed by the fact that there exists no such thing as ‘mainstream Old Testament scholarship’. Scholars hold different views as to the emergence of the Hebrew Bible. On many issues there is no consensus. Nevertheless, there is some sort of common ground shared by an important number of researchers:<sup>1</sup>

1. The Hebrew Bible received its current form, with the exception of some late books: Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles, Esther and Daniel, during or after the period of the Babylonian Exile.

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\* This chapter is based on two previous publications: B. Becking, ‘Is de Hebreeuwse Bijbel een hellenistisch boek?’, *NTT* 54 (2000), 1-17; B. Becking, ‘“Until this Day”. On an Adverbial Adjunct and Biblical Historiography’, in: M. Möller, Th. L. Thompson (eds.), *Historie og Konstruktion: Festkrift til Niels Peter Lemche i anledning af 60 års fødselsdagen den 6. September 2005* (Forum for Bibelsk Exegese 14), København 2005, 19-29.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g. E. Zenger u.a., *Einleitung in das Alte Testament: Zweite, durchgesehene und ergänzte Auflage* (KST 1,1), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1996; B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, San Francisco 1988; R. Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte Israels in alttestamentlicher Zeit* (GAT 8/1-2), Göttingen 1992; M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, London-New York 1995; F. M. Cross, *From Epic to Canon: History and Literature in Ancient Israel*, Baltimore 1999; W. G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*, Grand Rapids 2001; J.-L. Ska, *Les énigmes du passé: Histoire d’Israël et récit biblique* (Le Livre et le Rouleau 14), Bruxelles 2001; W. G. Dever, *Who Were the Early Israelites and Where Did They Come From?*, Grand Rapids 2003; M. S. Smith, *The Memoirs of God: History, Memory, and the Experience of the Divine in Ancient Israel*, Minneapolis 2004.

2. The Books of Samuel and Kings, although written in their final form in the late exilic or early Persian period contain some historically trustworthy information on the pre-exilic period that corroborates with archaeological and epigraphic evidence.
3. David and Solomon have lived. Their kingship, however, was historically speaking rather unimportant. The basic features of their portrait have been designed in the period of king Hezekiah as some sort of a proof text for good leadership. During the exile, their portraits have been retouched.
4. The period before David, is – historically speaking – unreachable, although it cannot be excluded beforehand that some features in the Books of Genesis and Exodus contain relevant information, but is not easy to control these features.
5. The traditional concept of religion in ancient Israel – that it was both monotheistic and aniconic – needs to be revised.<sup>2</sup>

This mainstream has some bandwidth and ends in a delta. On the one end there are scholars with a higher respect for the historicity of elements in the Hebrew Bible. De Moor, for instance, accepts the Exodus out of Egypt as historically reconstructable.<sup>3</sup> At the other side of the spectre are scholars with great doubts as to the historicity of King David. At this end there is a tendency to date greater parts of the Hebrew Bible in the Persian Period.<sup>4</sup> Recently, however, a new and more radical approach has taken form.

## *2. The radical school from Copenhagen*

The position defended by this ‘school’ can be summarized as follows: it is not before the Hellenistic Period, third and second centuries BCE, that the Hebrew Bible emerged. The writers could not use existing traditions, if present at all. Representatives of the radical school from Copenhagen sometimes compare the biblical writers with a Taliban-like, almost sectarian stream within the Judaism of those days. In their design of the

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<sup>2</sup> See Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte*; M. Dijkstra, ‘De godsdienstgeschiedenis van Oud-Israël: Ontwikkelingen na Vriezen en een nieuw ontwerp’, in: M. Dijkstra, K. J. H. Vriezen (eds.), *Th.C. Vriezen: Hervormd theoloog en oudtestamenticus*, Kampen 1999, 107-36.

<sup>3</sup> J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (Revised and enlarged edition; BETL 91), Leuven 1997.

<sup>4</sup> See especially J. van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, New Haven 1983; J. van Seters, *Prologue to History: The Yahwist in Genesis*, Louisville 1992; Ph. R. Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’* (JSOT Sup 148), Sheffield 1992; T. M. Bolin, ‘When the End is the Beginning: The Persian Period and the Origins of the Biblical Tradition’, *SJOT* 10 (1996), 3-15.

‘history of Israel’ they mostly communicated their own world view and not so much historical data. The tradition was ‘invented’.<sup>5</sup>

This position is not entirely new. Other scholars already suggested to date parts of the Hebrew Bible in the Hellenistic period.<sup>6</sup> A significant difference, however, lies in the fact that only parts of the Hebrew Bible were seen as Hellenistic and that a long process of tradition and redaction is assumed behind the *Endgestalt* of the text. Bernd Diebner from Heidelberg has written a variety of proposals to date the Hebrew Bible in the Hellenistic period,<sup>7</sup> but his connection to the radical school from Copenhagen is not transparent.

Is there evidence for the Copenhagen position? The two most important arguments are of a historiographical character. The first argument is based on the assumed absence of archaeological and epigraphic evidence in extra-biblical sources for all sorts of historical claims from the Hebrew Bible. When a history of Israel should be written on the basis of epigraphic and archaeological evidence only, then the description of the periods up to at least Solomon will differ in great extent from the picture designed in the Hebrew Bible. For the so-called Monarchic Period, only sparks of evidence are known, such as names of kings and the reports on the conquest of Samaria and Jerusalem. This basis is, in a Copenhagen point of view, too small to carry the weight of the assumption that the writers of the Hebrew Bible were in a way contemporaries of the events narrated by them. In other words, ‘Ancient Israel’ should not be construed as an historical category, but as a theological construct of a later time.<sup>8</sup>

The second main argument has to do with historiographical models. Already Van Seters has hinted at parallels between the historiography of Herodotus’ *Historiae* at the one hand and the narratives in the Pentateuch and the Deuteronomistic History on the other.<sup>9</sup> This assumption has been

<sup>5</sup> See especially: N. P. Lemche, ‘The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?’, *SJOT* 7 (1993), 163-93; N. P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, London 1998; Th. L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, London 1999 (identical with: Th. L. Thompson, *The Mythic Past: Biblical Archaeology and the Myth of Israel*, New York 1999); Th. L. Thompson, ‘Historiography in the Pentateuch: Twenty-Five Years after Historiography’, *SJOT* 13 (1999), 258-83.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., W. R. Millar, *Isaiah 24-27 and the Origin of Apocalyptic* (HSM 11), Missoula 1976; S. Bergler, *Joel als Schriftprophet* (BEATAJ 16), Frankfurt 1988; P. R. House, *Zephaniah: A Prophetic Drama* (JSOT Sup 69; BLS 16), Sheffield 1988; M. Treves, *The Dates of the Psalms: History and Poetry in Ancient Israel*, Pisa 1988.

<sup>7</sup> In various contributions to the *Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament*.

<sup>8</sup> Lemche, ‘The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?’, N. P. Lemche, *Die Vorgeschichte Israels: Von den Anfängen bis zum Ausgang des 13. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (BibEnz 1), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1996, esp. 68-73; Lemche, *Israelites in History and Tradition*; see also Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’*, esp. 57-71.

<sup>9</sup> J. van Seters, ‘Histories and Historians of the Ancient Near East: The Israelites’, *Or NS* 50 (1981), 137-85; J. van Seters, *In Search of History*.

elaborated – although far beyond Van Seters’ original aim<sup>10</sup> – by Nielsen and Wesselius, who on the basis of the dependency of the ‘Primary History’ in the Hebrew Bible on Herodotus, claim a date for greater parts of the Hebrew narrative in the period between 440 and 350 BCE.<sup>11</sup> This idea has been radicalized by Lemche and Thompson: Since the territory of Judah has only been hellenized late in the third century BCE, the influence from Herodotus is only imaginable in the second century BCE.<sup>12</sup>

This radical late dating of the Hebrew Bible has some important implications. In the area of ‘History of Israel’ this view implies that the Hebrew Bible can no longer be construed as an important historical source for early and pre-exilic Israel.<sup>13</sup> A comparable consequence needs to be drawn in the fields of ancient Israelite religion. Lemche has uttered the view that the Hebrew Bible can only be taken as testimony for its own and not as a source of information for developments in the religion in Israel. In his view, the religion in the ‘patriarchal period’ and the monarchic ages have to be written solely on the basis of epigraphic and archaeological evidence.<sup>14</sup> Since the tendencies in the Hebrew Bible are seen as ideologies, a Theology of the Old Testament is no longer of any importance.<sup>15</sup> Unintendedly, the radical school from Copenhagen supports a-historical, intertextual theological concepts such as designed by Frei and Lindbeck.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See H. M. Barstad, ‘Is the Hebrew Bible a Hellenistic Book? Or: Niels Peter Lemche, Herodotus, and the Persians’, *Transeuphratène* 23 (2002), 129-51.

<sup>11</sup> F. A. J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 251), Sheffield 1997; J. W. Wesselius, ‘Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible’, *SJOT* 13 (1999), 24-77; J. W. Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus’ Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOT Sup 345), Sheffield 2002. See also Bolin, ‘When the End is the Beginning’, *SJOT* 10 (1996), 14-15.

<sup>12</sup> Lemche, ‘The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?’, 183; Lemche, *Vorgeschichte*, 212-18. See also Thompson, *Bible in History*, 267-92.

<sup>13</sup> See esp. N. P. Lemche, ‘Is it Still Possible to Write a History of Ancient Israel?’, *SJOT* 8 (1994), 165-90.

<sup>14</sup> N. P. Lemche, ‘Kann von einer “Israelitischen Religion” noch weiterhin die Rede sein? Perspektiven eines Historikers’, in: W. Dietrich, M. Klopfenstein (eds.), *Ein Gott allein? JHWH-Verehrung und biblischer Monotheismus im Kontext der israelitischen und altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (OBO 139), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1994, 59-75.

<sup>15</sup> See N. P. Lemche, ‘Warum die Theologie des Alten Testaments einen Irrweg darstellt’, *JBTh* 10 (1995), 79-92; Thompson, *Bible in History*, 293-374; R. P. Carroll, *Wolf in the Sheepfold: The Bible as Problematic for Theology*, London 1997.

<sup>16</sup> H. Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*, New Haven 1974; G. A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, London 1984; the term ‘a-historical, intertextual theological concepts’ has been derived from M. G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies*, Cambridge 1991, 156; see also L. G. Perdue, *The Collapse of History: Reconstructing Old Testament Theology* (Overtures to Biblical Theology), Minneapolis 1994, esp. 231-62.

All in all, this is a daring hypothesis with wide-ranging implications for biblical studies and the understanding of the Hebrew Bible as part of a theological discourse. The question then rises, whether the concept from Copenhagen is plausible.

### 3. *Is the Book of Kings a Hellenistic book?*

In the next sections, I will test the plausibility of the Copenhagen concept by analyzing the presuppositions and implications of this view. My remarks are in an arbitrary order.

#### 3.1. Bibliophobia

Hans Barstad has shown that the view under consideration is based on some sort of *bibliophobia*.<sup>17</sup> The Copenhagen view is to be understood as such an understandable reaction to the presence of too much *bibliophilia* in ancient Israelite historiography.<sup>18</sup> A historian has, by definition, to take an ambiguous stand toward his or her source(s). The trade of historical research – in the sense of finding reliable evidence – asks for suspicion, but the art of (re)construction asks for some sort of trust in the given sources. I would like to plead for a good balance between these two extremes. A position of pure distrust might lead to a concept of history in which the past is vapourised or reduced to a few disconnected ‘facts’ that hardly have any meaning. The historian who, however, fully trusts the sources, might miss the idea that the author of a given text has merged the event with her or his *symbolic system* making a pure view of the event almost impossible.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, it seems better to seek a balance between trust and suspicion. It seems to me to be methodically sound to take the historicity of an event as narrated or supposed in a given source, until other evidence shows its improbability. Or phrased otherwise, I take propositional elements of the biblical history for trustworthy, albeit under the following stipulations:

- (p) is historically trustworthy under the following two conditions:
- (c<sub>1</sub>) (p) fits the general historical framework of its time as known to us
- (c<sub>2</sub>) (p) is not falsified by other evidence.

<sup>17</sup> H. M. Barstad, ‘The Strange Fear of the Bible: Some Reflections on the “Bibliophobia” in Recent Ancient Israelite Historiography’, in L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive* (ESHM 2; JSOT Sup 278), Sheffield 1998, 120-27.

<sup>18</sup> See also the debate that Simple Simon and Naive Nelly have with Crafty Cathy and Shifty Bill in B. Halpern, ‘Biblical or Israelite History?’, in: R. E. Friedman, H. G. M. Williamson (eds.), *The Future of Biblical Studies: The Hebrew Scriptures* (SBL Semeia Series), Atlanta 1987, 103-39.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York 1973, 91-93.

I share the view that Samaria was conquered by Shalmanasser V in 723 BCE (p), since this assumption corroborates both stipulations. This date fits in the general pattern of the Assyrians taking over control step by step (c<sub>1</sub>). The absence of a remark in Assyrian inscriptions that would verify this assumption, can not be taken as a falsification of (p) as has often been remarked by Lemche, Thompson and Smelik.<sup>20</sup> Their view is in fact asking for verification. From a methodological point of view, verification does not supply new insights, but a repetition of the hypothesis. The absence of supplementary evidence simply signifies ‘we don’t know this further’, but that phrase does not equal ‘this has not taken place’. Anyone who equals these two utterances, only shows his or her *symbolic system* – probably based on bibliophobia. In short, I do agree with Barstad that the Hebrew Bible most probably contains historically trustworthy elements that predate the Hellenistic period.

### 3.2. Does the idea of a final redaction exclude earlier versions of a text?

The hypothesis of a Hellenistic Hebrew Bible touches on the following supposition, in fact it stands in conflict with it. A late date concurs with the tradition-historical possibility that the final redaction would contain older material that can be isolated by applying the correct literary-critical methods. These isolated blocks then can be used as elements for the reconstruction of history before the date of the final redaction. This is the classical position that will be illustrated below in ch. 3 with regard to the narrative on the vineyard of Naboth in 1 Kgs. 21. A variety of theories have been proposed as for the reconstruction of the more original form of the story with a consensus seeming to be far away.

In fact, a comparable outline could be made for almost every pericope in the Hebrew Bible. This entangling variety of possible *Urtexts* is one of the reasons, why the radical school from Copenhagen denies the possibility to reconstruct older literary strata of a given tradition. In using this argument, the character of redaction has been misunderstood. Any narrative on the past is based on two principles: selection and connection. The author makes a selection of the existing (traditional) elements. The criterion for selecting is mostly connected with the *symbolic system* of the writer. The selected material is then arranged in such a way that the reader can easily follow the development of the story. In the Book of Kings traditional material is arranged applying the order of the kings of Israel and Judah. In doing so, the authors stress their view that deeds and doings of kings were of great importance for the eventual fate of Israel and Judah. The final form of a given text is the product of this process of selection and connection. This

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<sup>20</sup> K. A. D. Smelik, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OTS 28), Leiden 1992, esp. 1-34.



implies that the texts in its final form informs its reader especially about the world view of the final redactors, but two problems are involved.

1. Despite all problems of the reconstruction of earlier layers, the use of the indicator ‘final redactor’ implies the existence of earlier redactors and their views.
2. Dating texts seems to be an act comparable to an informed guess. In the next section this problem will be discussed.

### 3.3. On dating texts

On what grounds are texts dated and what are we doing when we date texts? As argument in favour of a Hellenistic provenance of the Book of Kings, it has been brought forward that the historical patterns in the Hellenistic period would fit better than earlier periods the tendencies in the Hebrew narratives. The troublesome relations between Seleucids and Ptolemies, for instance, could have been a model for the design of the dichotomy between Northern Israel and Southern Judah in the narratives in the Book of Kings.<sup>21</sup>

This way of dating text is based on the so-called lock-and-key model developed by Christoph Hardmeier in his analysis of the Hezekiah-Sennacherib stories.<sup>22</sup> The text, in its more original or its final form, is construed as a key. The (re)constructed history of the time in which the text is assumed to have been written or received its final redaction is to be compared with a lock. When lock and key match, the door opens and a date has been made possible.

A few remarks need to be made:

1. There is always the fallacy of circular argumentation, especially when the key has been smoothed in a literary critical way. As regards form criticism, circular reasoning has not always been avoided. One gets the impression sometimes that the *Sitz im Leben* has been invented for the text under consideration leading to some sort of a Baron of Münchhausen way of doing.
2. Another lock is always conceivable. Hardmeier dates \*2 Kgs. 18–20 shortly before the exile, but a Maccabean date would also provide a nice

<sup>21</sup> Lemche, ‘The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?’, 163–93; Lemche, *Israelites in History and Tradition*; Thompson, *Bible in History*, 3–4, 196–99; see also I. Hjelm, ‘Cult Centralization as a Device of Cult Control?’, *SJOT* 13 (1999), 298–309.

<sup>22</sup> Chr. Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja- und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18–20 und Jer 37–40* (BZAW 187), Berlin-New York 1990; see also B. Becking, ‘Nehemiah 9 and the Problematic Concept of Context (*Sitz im Leben*)’, in: E. Ben Zvi, M. A. Sweeney (eds.), *The Changing Face of Form Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*, Grand Rapids 2003, 253–65.

interpretation. Since forms can function in a variety of contexts a variety of possibilities is open.<sup>23</sup>

3. Our knowledge of historical processes and patterns in Ancient Israel is not only debated but also limited. Any history of Ancient Israel that goes beyond the enumeration of dates, should be seen as a representation of the past in which the *symbolic system* of the person who made this representation plays a role.<sup>24</sup> The lock in which the key is turned, is not an objective entity but a proposal from the part of the historian. The same should be said about the context or *Sitz im Leben*. They do not form objective entities, but we are not left in the swamp of subjectivity. The more data we have for a certain period, the more we can reach an agreement. The history of Israel in the Hellenistic period is not a report on 'what really happened', but a proposal by a modern historian.<sup>25</sup> For this period several written sources are at hand, such as the Zenon Papyri; Josephus, *Ant.*; Agatharchides of Cnidus<sup>26</sup>; 1-4 *Maccabees*; Polybius, *Historia*; the remnants of the writings of Nicolaus of Damascus<sup>27</sup>; various documents from Qumran; Demetrius the Chronographer; Strabo, *Geographia*; Appianus, *Syrian Wars*. Complemented with archaeological evidence<sup>28</sup> a narrative<sup>29</sup> and biased<sup>30</sup> history can be written.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>23</sup> See also H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen 1975.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, Cambridge 1968; E. A. Knauf, 'From History to Interpretation', in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOT Sup 127), Sheffield 1991, 26-64.

<sup>25</sup> See R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926-1928*, Oxford 1994; M. Stanford, *The Nature of Historical Knowledge*, Oxford 1987.

<sup>26</sup> Apud Josephus, *Ant.* 12.1.1. §§ 3-10; *Ag. Ap.* 1.22 §§ 209-12; see also M. Stern (ed.), *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*. Vol. 1: *From Herodotus to Plutarch*, Jerusalem 1986, 104-09; B. Bar-Kochva, *Pseudo-Hecataeus, "On the Jews": Legitimizing the Jewish Diaspora* (Hellenistic Culture and Society, 21), Berkeley-Los Angeles 1966, 74-75.

<sup>27</sup> See Stern (ed.), *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 227-260; B.Z. Wacholder, *Nicolaus of Damascus* (University of California Publications in History 75), Berkeley 1962.

<sup>28</sup> See esp. M. Arav, *Hellenistic Palestine: Settlement Patterns and City Planning 337-31 B.C.E.*, Oxford 1989; H.-P. Kuhnen, *Palästina in griechisch-römischer Zeit* (Handbuch der Archäologie II,2), München 1990. On coins from this period see: Y. Meshorer, *Ancient Jewish Coinage*. Vol. 1: *Persian Period through Hasmonaeans*, New York 1982; Y. Meshorer, Sh. Qedar, *The Samaritan Coinage*, New York 1991; O. Mørkholm, *Early Hellenistic Coinage: From the Accession of Alexander to the Peace of Apamea (336-188 B.C.)* (ed. by P. Grierson, U. Westermark), Cambridge 1991; L. Mildenberg, *Vestigia Leonis: Studien zur antiken Numismatik Israels* (NTOA 36), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1998.

<sup>29</sup> On the idea of a narrative history see Danto, *Analytical Philosophy*; Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*; and the remarks by Barstad, 'History and the Hebrew Bible', 54-60.

<sup>30</sup> Objectivity versus subjectivity is much debated problem; see K. Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie: Auswahl aus dem Werk*, Neuwied 1970, and the papers in J. Rüsen (ed.), *Historische Objektivität: Aufsätze zur Geschichtsphilosophie* (Kleine Vandenhoeck Reihe 1416), Göttingen 1975.

4. Dating a text is therefore a hermeneutical act<sup>32</sup> rather than a historical endeavour.<sup>33</sup> When Lemche reads the narratives from the Hebrew Bible in the Hellenistic age, he is not so much producing history, but rather making a proposal for a lock in which the key can fit. The fact that meaning is supplied when reading these narratives against that historical background,<sup>34</sup> is an indication that this is a suitable lock. This one fit does not imply that other locks are impossible. Reading, for instance, the stories on King David as a *Fürstenspiegel* from the reign of Hezekiah,<sup>35</sup> or the stories on the building of the First Temple in an early post-exilic setting, too supplies meaning.<sup>36</sup>

All these remarks suppose that the procedure for dating Biblical texts remains hypothetical. From the point of view of historical method, the 'lock-and-key' procedure is tenable, but it should always be applied in a way which remains open for discussion. For the current discussion, this implies that the fact that the Book of Kings (key) would match the Hellenistic period (lock) does not compellingly lead to the conclusion that these texts were written in Hellenistic times. Other locks are possible, from the Babylonian Exile up to the rebellion of the Low Countries against Spain in the sixteenth century CE. Reading the Book of Kings against the background of the War of Eighty Years does supply meaning, so the text could have been written as a reflection on the conversion of the City of Amsterdam to protestantism. And, of course, David is a chiffrage for the 'good prince' William of Orange.

### 3.4. Yahwistic or Jewish?

A date for the emergence of the Book of Kings as part of the Hebrew Bible in the Hellenistic period has an important implication that cannot be overlooked. In case the text really emerged in that era, it would have been a Jewish document, since Judaism – in whatever variety – was the religion of the Jewish people of those days. In my view, however, the Book of Kings cannot be construed as Jewish. It is a document of Yahwism.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Second edition), Grand Rapids 1993, 406-79; L. L. Grabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, London 1994, 171-311.

<sup>32</sup> This view is strongly suggested by W. G. Jeanrond, *Texts and Interpretation as Categories of Theological Thinking*, Dublin 1988, 104-28; Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis?*, 76-115.

<sup>33</sup> As is implied in many rather traditional approaches to the History of ancient Israel.

<sup>34</sup> Let us assume for a moment that we possess real knowledge of the Hellenistic period.

<sup>35</sup> As is done by W. Dietrich, *Die frühe Königszeit in Israel: 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (BibEnz 3), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Let us assume for a moment that we possess real knowledge of the times of Hezekiah and the early post-exilic period.

Although Yahwism and Judaism have many features in common, they are not identical and need to be construed as two different forms of religion. Traditionally, the Babylonian Exile is seen as the watershed between the two. This, however, turned out to be too simple a construction. With Diana Edelman, I suppose a complex process that formed the transition from Yahwism – up to the Exilic period<sup>37</sup> – to Judaism. This process passed the stations ‘National Yahwism’, ‘First Temple Yahwism’, ‘Templeless Yahwism’<sup>38</sup> and ‘Second Temple Yahwism’ on its route to early Judaism.<sup>39</sup> Although Edelman’s indications for various forms of religion in Judah can be debated on details, her proposal supplies a good model for understanding. It is not my aim to discuss here the details of the various forms of Yahwisms and Judaisms. It is my thesis that the Hebrew Bible, except for some passages that are windows into the remnants of pre-monotheistic Yahwism, contains texts that refer to the first three forms of religion as classified by Edelman.<sup>40</sup>

In case the Book of Kings – as part of a Hellenistic Hebrew Bible – would have been a document of Hellenistic times, the following features were to be expected in it:

1. References to religious conflicts within Hellenistic Judaism. These are, however, absent.
2. The dichotomy between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ would have been defined in terms like ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’, and not in moral categories as is now the case.<sup>41</sup>
3. The idea of divine providence – a loan from Greek philosophy – is present in Jewish texts like Wisd. 14:3; 3 Macc. 4:21; 5:30; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.5.9 §§ 171-72; *Pirke Aboth* 3:16, but absent in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> And even later.

<sup>38</sup> The term has been adopted from J. Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford Theological Monographs), Oxford 2005.

<sup>39</sup> D. V. Edelman, ‘Introduction’, in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Triumph of Elohim: From Yahwisms to Judaisms* (CBET 13), Kampen 1995, 23-24.

<sup>40</sup> See also M. S. Smith, *The early history of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Early Israel*, San Francisco 1990; Albertz, *Religionsgeschichte*; K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of Religious Life* (SHCANE 7), Leiden 1996; H. Niehr, ‘Auf dem Weg zu einer Religionsgeschichte Israels und Judas: Annäherungen an einen Problemkreis’, in: B. Janowski, M. Köckert (eds.), *Religionsgeschichte Israels: Formale und materiale Aspekte*, Gütersloh 1999, 57-78; Dijkstra, ‘Godsdienstgeschiedenis van Oud Israël’.

<sup>41</sup> See E. Otto, *Theologische Ethik des Alten Testaments* (Theologische Wissenschaft 3,2), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1994; J. W. Rogerson, *Theory and Practice in Old Testament Ethics* (edited and with an introduction by M. Daniel Carroll R.; JSOT Sup 405), London-New York 2004.

<sup>42</sup> See, e.g., J. Mansfeld, ‘Providence and the Destruction of the Universe in Early Stoic Thought’, in: M. J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Studies in Hellenistic Religions* (EPRO 78), Leiden 1979, 129-88; R. L. Gordon, ‘Pronoia’, in: *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 664-67.

It is therefore more probable that the Hebrew Bible, with the exception of the Books of Daniel and Esther, has been written, or has received its current form, during the complex transit from Yahwisms to Judaism. Older, pre-exilic or Iron Age II/III material could have been used and rewritten. In my view, the Book of Kings received its present form in the period of troublesome transition: during the Babylonian exile or in the Persian Period.

### 3.5. The Hebrew language

In case the Book of Kings, as part of a Hellenistic Hebrew Bible, would have emerged not earlier than the Hellenistic era, would not the Hebrew in this book be more akin to the kind of Hebrew we know from the documents of Qumran or the Book of Ben Sira? Against the traditional view that the Hebrew Bible is written in a (pre-)exilic form of classical Hebrew<sup>43</sup>, Lemche offered a different interpretation.<sup>44</sup> He opts for a multidimensional synchronic theory of language: In a given society various forms and dialects of a language can easily live next to each other. The language generally labelled 'classical Hebrew', is in his eyes nothing more than the archaizing language used by the authors of the Hebrew Bible, while in Qumran a more contemporary form of the language was applied. In case Lemche were correct, a diachronic view on the Hebrew language would be impossible.

In this connection I would, however, like to refer to some linguistic data known from epigraphic Hebrew. The Hebrew ostraca from Arad<sup>45</sup> and – to a lesser degree – the letters from Lachish<sup>46</sup> are of great importance. The date of these texts is clear: The Arad ostraca were written in the seventh century BCE while the Lachish ostraca can be dated, from their contents, to the last years of Judah's independence in the sixth century BCE. These texts have been written in a form of Hebrew that syntactically and semantically is almost identical to the kind of Hebrew found in the Books of Kings and Jeremiah. This form of Hebrew can be labelled as 'standard Hebrew'. Albright has used this observation as an argument for a pre-exilic layer in

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., A. Hurvitz, *A Linguistic Study of the Relationship between the Priestly Source and the Book of Ezekiel: A New Approach to an Old Problem* (Cahiers de la Revue Biblique 20), Paris 1982; Cross, *From Epic to Canon*, 29-40.

<sup>44</sup> N. P. Lemche, 'How to Date an Expression of Mental History? The Old Testament and Hellenism', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period* (JSOT Sup 317; ESHM 3), Sheffield 2001, 200-24.

<sup>45</sup> Editio princeps: Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1981. See also: A. Lemaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques. Tome 1: Les ostraca*, Paris 1977, 147-235; J. Renz, *Die alt-hebräischen Inschriften* (HAE I,1), Darmstadt 1995, 347-403.

<sup>46</sup> Editio princeps: H. Torczyner, *Lachish I: The Lachish Letters*, London 1938. See also: Lemaire, *Inscriptions Hébraïques*, 85-143; Renz, *Die alt-hebräischen Inschriften*, 405-40.

the Deuteronomistic History Writing.<sup>47</sup> Although Albright's conclusion overinterprets the evidence – he assumes a shift in Classical Hebrew within the fifty years between king Josiah and the Exile – the observation can still be used for the thesis that in Iron Age III and the Babylonian Period a form of Classical or Standard Hebrew was spoken that also is reflected in the Books of Kings and Jeremiah.<sup>48</sup> In my view these remarks have the following implications:

1. The emergence of the Book of Kings from the period of the Babylonian Exile is still a very plausible theory.
2. A diachronic explanation of the linguistic variation within Hebrew is still to be preferred above a synchronic approach.
3. The linguistic evidence can therefore not be used as an undisputable argument for the Hellenistic date of the Book of Kings.

### 3.6. 'Until this day'

In the narratives of the Hebrew Bible the adverbial adjunct עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, "until this day", occurs a few dozen times. This formula indicates that a situation as described in the narrative is still present in the time of the author.<sup>49</sup> Some scholars argue for the following view. Since the formula עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה is attested in the sources of the Deuteronomistic History as well as in its first redactional layer and it there refers to the existence of the state of Judah, this formula can be seen as an indication of a pre-exilic date for the sources and the first redaction of DtrH.<sup>50</sup> The remark in 2 Kgs. 17:23, for instance that the exile of Northern Israel to Assyria lasted 'until this day' can be read and understood when 'this' is seen as equal to the period of

<sup>47</sup> W. F. Albright, *The Biblical Period from Abraham to Ezra: An Historical Survey*, New York 1963, 45-46. F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge 1973, 274-89; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981, 26-27, have repeated this argument in favour of a pre-exilic Dtr1.

<sup>48</sup> This argument has been reinforced by the analyses of I. Young, *Diversity in Pre-Exilic Hebrew* (FAT 5), Tübingen 1993; S. L. Gogel, *A Grammar of Epigraphic Hebrew* (SBL RBS 23), Atlanta 1998, 233-92.

<sup>49</sup> See mainly B. S. Childs, 'A Study of the Formula "Until this Day"', *JBL* 82 (1963), 279-92.

<sup>50</sup> E.g. J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London 1977, 13; Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 275; M. Cogan, 'Israel in Exile: The View of a Josianic Historian', *JBL* 97 (1978), 40-44; H. Tadmor, M. Cogan, 'Ahaz and Tiglath-Pileser in the Book of Kings: Historiographic Considerations', *Bibl* 60 (1979), 497-98; J. C. Geoghegan, *The Time, Place, and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of "Until This Day"* (Brown Judaic Studies 347), Providence 2006. R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981, who pleads for a pre-exilic date of Dtr1, denies the possibility to use this formula for dating texts or redactions (esp. 23-25).

King Josiah, in whose days Israel was still in exile.<sup>51</sup> In case this view is correct, it would supply an argument against Lemche's position, since it can be seen as a falsification of his presuppositions. But, is this view correct, and to what degree then can it function as an argument against a Hellenistic dating of the main narratives of the Hebrew Bible?

### 3.6.1. A survey of the evidence

The expression *עד היום הזה*, "until this day", occurs at various instances, in different genres, in different sources and redactional layers. Although the expression occurs most frequently in DtrH, it is also attested in the narratives of the Pentateuch, in the Book of Chronicles and a few times in the Book of Jeremiah. Throughout these various texts the expression does not have one specific literary function, as will become clear from the following survey.

#### a) Occurrences in direct speech

The expression *עד היום הזה*, "until this day", is attested about 20 times in textual parts that are in direct speech.

1. In a personal confession on God's helping nearness: "And he blessed Joseph, and said: 'God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day'" (Gen. 48:15; 'he' refers to the dying Jacob.).
2. In confessional texts that highlight God's aid for the people through the ages *עד היום הזה*, "until this day" (Deut. 29:3; Jer. 32:20)."
3. To indicate the faithfulness of the people, to whom it is said: "You have not left your siblings these many days until this day, but have kept the charge of the commandment of YHWH, your God" (Josh. 22:3; see also Josh. 3:8).
4. To indicate the unfaithfulness of the people (Josh. 22:17; Judg. 19:30).
5. As in 4., but then in contrast to YHWH's divine loyalty. As Jeremiah prophecies: "Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt until this day I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early and sending them" (Jer. 7:25; see also 1 Sam. 8:8; 2 Kgs. 21:15; Jer. 11:7; 44:10).
6. Various other texts such as Exod. 10:6; 1 Sam. 29:8; 2 Sam. 7:16//1 Chron. 17:5; 2 Kgs. 20:17//Isa. 39:6; Jer. 25:2.

<sup>51</sup> See, e.g., B. Becking, 'From Apostasy to Destruction: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria', see page 104; for a different view see Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*, 202-12.

It should be noted that in all the texts mentioned הוזה primarily refers to the ‘now’ of the speaker and not to the ‘now’ of the narrator, although it is the narrator that focalises the propositions made by the ‘speakers’. Within the text-internal chronology of the texts mentioned, הוזה refers to a variety of ‘nows’ within the biblical narrative: From the Period of the Patriarchs, over the Conquest of the Land up to the Exilic Age. These ‘nows’ cannot easily be equalled with ‘nows’ in the real-time history of Ancient Israel. Every equation would rest on an assumption regarding the date of the composition or redaction of the text. The Jeremian passages, for instance, might either be original,<sup>52</sup> part of an exilic, or early post-exilic redaction of that Biblical Book,<sup>53</sup> or seen as an element of a late Hellenistic redaction. Since circular reasoning must be avoided, no conclusions can be drawn on the basis on the material displayed so far that the remark that the expression עד היום הוזה, “until this day”, cannot be related to one specific, datable layer within the Hebrew narrative.

#### b) Occurrences in texts with an etiological character

The Hebrew Bible contains various etiological tales. These are explanatory narratives mostly on geographical names that were still in use in the time of the narrator. In Gen. 26:33 the name Beersheba is explained by using a pun on the name element Sheba, since it is connected with the swearing of an oath between Isaac and Abimelech of Gerar in Gen 26:31 (וישבנו איש לאחיו). In the literary-critical approach to the Patriarchal narratives, Gen. 26 has not been allotted convincingly to one of the traditional sources. The archaeological record of Beersheba shows that the city was a royal administrative centre during Iron Age II and III. During the Persian and Hellenistic periods the city was only scarcely inhabited with no clear evidence that the city should be construed as Yehudite or Jewish.<sup>54</sup> Most probably, Beersheba by then was in Edomite territory. Nevertheless, הוזה in the expression עד היום הוזה, “until this day”, in Gen 26:33 could refer to each given period. Especially since in the narrative in Gen. 26 Beersheba is not considered as an Israelite stronghold.

A comparable argument could be elaborated for the other instances where the expression עד היום הוזה, “until this day”, is attested in etiological narratives (Deut. 3:14; Josh. 4:9; 5:9; 7:26; Judg. 1:26; 10:4; 15:9; 18:12; 2 Sam. 6:8//1 Chron. 13:11; 1 Kgs. 9:13; 2 Kgs. 14:7). These texts, just mentioned, have generally been labelled as deuteronomistic. But it depends on

<sup>52</sup> Thus, e.g., D. Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah*, Leicester 1987; Geoghegan, *Time, Place, and Purpose*, 161-62.

<sup>53</sup> See W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1-25* (WMANT 41), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973; W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26-45* (WMANT 52; Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981).

<sup>54</sup> D. W. Manor, ‘Beersheba’, in: *ABD* I, 641-45.



one's theory regarding the emergence of DtrH, when these texts should be dated.<sup>55</sup> 1 Chron. 13:11 is, by implication, post-exilic. But the geographical names mentioned in the other texts do not hint at a specific period in Israel's history. Kirjat-jearim in Judah, mentioned Mahane-Dan in Judg. 18:12, is known from texts that are certainly post-exilic, such as Neh. 7:29; 1 Chron. 13:6. That observation, however, does not exclude a late-monarchic or exilic date for the redaction of the Book of Judges.

In sum, from the occurrences in texts with an etiological character no conclusions can be drawn as to the date of the expression *עד היום הזה*, "until this day".

### c) Occurrences in testimony formulas

In a great number of texts, the expression *עד היום הזה*, "until this day", indicates that various political, geographical, sociological, and cultic features with a traditional character are still present in the time of the narrator.<sup>56</sup> These texts should not be construed as etiological tales, since they only underscore the durability and stability of various features and institutions and are generally given without explanatory remarks. They should be seen as devices of continuity, meanwhile hinting at a time-span between 'then' and 'now'. I will list various examples.

1. Public Institutions. In Gen. 47:26 it is narrated that a census system in Egypt allowing the Pharaoh 20% of the land benefits, still in use 'until this day', has been instituted by Joseph. The Joseph story should be construed as a fictional narrative in which the mention of this Egyptian census is part of the *couleur locale*.<sup>57</sup> This implies that no conclusions can be drawn as to the time slot to which *היום הזה* here refers. 1 Sam. 30:25 informs its reader that a certain battle tactics developed by David is still in use 'until this day'. This would only make sense in times when Israel or Judah was an independent nation with its own army, be it a standing army or an army that could be called into action occasionally. In my view this implies either a pre-exilic date or a background in the days of Nehemiah, when this wall builder had a small army at his disposal.
2. The presence of ethnic or tribal groups in specific areas. The following groups are said to live in the pertinent areas 'until this day':

<sup>55</sup> See Th. C. Römer, A. de Pury, 'Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues', in: A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOT Sup 306), Sheffield 2000, 24-141.

<sup>56</sup> Childs, 'Study of the Formula', 292, labels these texts as 'testimony formulas'.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., W. Dietrich, *Die Josefserzählung als Novelle und Geschichtsschreibung* (BThSt 14), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1989, esp. 42-43.

Edomites:	in Seir	Deut. 2:22; 2 Kgs. 16:6
Simeonites:	in Amalek	2 Kgs. 17:23; 2 Chron. 5:26
Israelites:	in Assyria	2 Kgs. 17:23

3. It is not easy to make inferences from these data. There is evidence for an Edomite presence in Transjordan up to the Persian Period.<sup>58</sup> In the Hellenistic era the Edomites made place for the Nabataeans, making a date for Deut. 2:22; 2 Kgs. 16:6 in the Hellenistic era less probable unless one takes 'Edomites' as a symbolic name for 'Nabataeans'. The presence of Israelites in Assyria, referring to descendants of the exiles from the former Northern Kingdom, supposedly ended with the rise of the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom.<sup>59</sup> The mention of these Israelites in the Book of Chronicles – most probably a document from the fourth century BCE<sup>60</sup> – implies that they could have been seen as a chiffre for the exiles from Judah and their descendants.<sup>61</sup> 'Canaanites', most probably referring to anyone not-Israelite, is too vague a term to use as an argument in a historical discourse.<sup>62</sup>
4. The executing of corvée labour by the Canaanites. This feature, mentioned in Josh. 9:27 and 1 Kgs. 9:21 is only conceivable in monarchic times. The mention, however, in 2 Chron. 8:8 indicates that it could also function within a literary fiction.
5. Geographical and scenic peculiarities. Since these elements are in a way independent from historical activities, their mention can make sense in almost all periods of Ancient Israel. It concerns: the unknown place of the tomb of Moses (Deut. 34:6); devastated Ai (Josh. 8:28.29); a big stone near Beth Shemesh (1 Sam. 6:18); a memorial stele – most probably a מצבה – for Absalom (2 Sam. 18:18).
6. Sociological data. The Rechabites do not drink wine 'until this day' (Jer. 35:44). Not much is known about this semi-nomadic, slightly conservative group. These 'Amish of Ancient Israel' moved to Jerusalem shortly before the Babylonian capture of this city. In post-exilic times they no longer seem to be existent. Nonetheless, traditions about the Rekabites endured the ages, as becomes clear from the fourth-century CE pseudepi-

<sup>58</sup> J. R. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOT Sup 77), Sheffield 1989, esp. 147-74.

<sup>59</sup> See B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (SHANE 2), Leiden-New York-Köln 1992, 61-93; B. Becking, 'West Semites at Tell Šeh Hamad: Evidence for the Israelite Exile?', in: E. A. Knauf, U. Hübner (eds.), *Kein Land für sich allein: Studien zum Kulturkontakt in Kanaan, Israel/Palästina und Ebir nâri für Manfred Weippert zum 65. Geburtstag* (OBO 186), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 2002, 153-66.

<sup>60</sup> See S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles* (OTL), London 1993; G.N. Knoppers, *I Chronicles 1-9* (AB 12), New York 2004.

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*.

<sup>62</sup> See N. P. Lemche, *The Canaanites and their Land: The Traditions of the Canaanites* (JSOT Sup 110), Sheffield 1991.

graphon 'The History of the Rechabites', indicating that a post-exilic reference to the Rechabites was not by definition meaningless.<sup>63</sup>

7. Territorial-political data. At first sight these references seem to indicate pre-exilic features: Hebron being a heritage of Kaleb (Josh. 14:14); Ziklag belonging to Judah (1 Sam. 27:6); the Northern Kingdom independent from Judah (1 Kgs. 12:19); Edom no longer under Judahite rule (2 Kgs. 8:22), but the fact that the last two references are repeated in Chronicles (2 Chron. 8:22; 21:10) can be seen as an indication that these features can function in a fictional context.
8. Data concerning the cult and the temple. In Deut. 10:8; Judg. 6:24; 1 Sam. 5:5; 1 Kgs. 8:8; 2 Kgs. 10:27; 17:34.41 remarks are made that within their narrative context would refer to the First Temple and pre-exilic cult. Nonetheless, some items could be connected to circumstances under the Second Temple.
9. 1 Kgs. 10:12 makes a remark on the non-recurrent quality of the Almugin-wood from Phoenicia: 'And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of YHWH, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.'

What conclusions can be drawn from the survey of the material in connection with my methodological remarks?

1. First of all, it should be noted that in a variety of texts a historical detachment could be detected. The expression עד היום הזה "until this day", indicates a distance in time between the alleged 'event' and the composition or final redaction of the narrative.
2. It is impossible to consider all texts that contain the expression עד היום הזה "until this day", as belonging to one redactional layer. 1 Kgs. 12:17 might have been composed before the Fall of Samaria. Various texts make the impression of being pre-exilic in origin (e.g., Josh. 9:27; 1 Sam. 27:6). Others are clearly post-exilic (1 & 2 Chronicles). In many instances an 'undecided' must be given. There are too many locks in which the key could fit.
3. The expression עד היום הזה, "until this day", therefore cannot be used as a dating device.<sup>64</sup>

This implies that the presence of the expression עד היום הזה, "until this day", cannot be used as a knockdown argument against Lemche's view. In other words it does not supply a falsification of the thesis that the Hebrew Bible

<sup>63</sup> I leave aside the discussion whether the Yemenite Jews might be descendants from the Rechabites, see L. de St. Aignan, *La tribu des Rechabites retrouvée*, Versailles 1871; *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. R. Asher, London 1840-41.

<sup>64</sup> See also Childs, 'Study of the Formula', 292; Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 23-25; pace Geoghegan, *Time, Place, and Purpose*, 119-40.

were a Hellenistic book, but it is neither a verification, since too many other options are still open. In other words, the Hellenistic era cannot be excluded as the time of the final redaction of the Hebrew Bible, but it was certainly not the period of its production.

### 3.7. References in Greek-Hellenistic authors

Against a Hellenistic date of the Hebrew Bible and by implication of the Book of Kings stands the fact that in the Hellenistic era texts were written that presuppose the existence of the Hebrew Bible, or at least greater parts of it. Around 300 BCE, Hecateus of Abdera composed a report on Jewish history and institutions.<sup>65</sup> His report cannot be labelled as an accurate witness to the history of Israel. It seems as if Hecateus only reflects Jewish practices of his own days. Nevertheless, some elements in his story presuppose the existence of the Books of Exodus, Numbers and Leviticus. Hecateus namely narrates on the exodus out of Egypt, on Moses as law-giver and founder of an aniconic and monotheistic religion.<sup>66</sup> This brings me to the hypothesis that what is now called the Pentateuch should not be construed as a Hellenistic invention, but is the result of a long process of tradition that – unfortunately – cannot be reconstructed in all its details.

This supposition can be reinforced by observations in other Hellenistic authors: Demetrius the Chronographer and Artapanus. Demetrius lived in the last quarter of the third century BCE. The remaining fragments of his writings on the history of Israel<sup>67</sup> make clear that he has been using the Old Greek translation of the Pentateuch as a source for information.<sup>68</sup> Of great

<sup>65</sup> The text is transmitted in Diodorus Siculus, 40:3; the Greek text with a good translation can be found in Stern (ed.), *Greek and Latin Authors* 1, 20-35. See also: *Ep. Arist.* 31; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 1, 183-204; D. Mendels, 'Hecataeus of Abdera and a Jewish "patris politeia" of the Persian Period', *ZAW* 95 (1983), 96-110; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 173-74; Bar-Kochva, *Pseudo-Hecataeus*, 7-43; P. R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (Library of Ancient Israel), Louisville 1998, 102-06; L. L. Grabbe, *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period. Vol. 1: Yehud. A History of the Persian Province of Judah* (LSTS 47), London-New York 2004, 341.

<sup>66</sup> The absence of references to the patriarchs in Hecateus' report cannot be taken as proof for the fact that in his days traditions on the patriarchs did not yet exist, *pace* Davies, *Scribes and Schools*, 105.

<sup>67</sup> Edition, translation and commentary in C. R. Holladay, *Fragments from Hellenistic Jewish Authors, Vol. 1: Historians* (SBL Texts and Translations 20; Pseudepigrapha Series 10), Atlanta 1983, 51-91; see also H. W. Attridge, 'Historiography', in: M. E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (CRINT 2,II), Assen 1984, 161-62.

<sup>68</sup> See esp. J. Freudenthal, *Hellenistische Studien: Alexander Polyhistor und die von ihm erhaltene Reste jüdischer und samaritanischer Geschichtswerke*, Zwei Bände, Breslau 1874-75, 39-40; P. W. van der Horst, 'The Interpretation of the Bible by Minor Hellenistic Jewish Authors', in: M. J. Mulder (ed.), *Mikra* (CRINT 2,I), Assen 1988, 528-32; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 236.

importance is the sixth fragment, transmitted in Clemens of Alex., *Strom.* 1.21.141:1-2:

1. But Demetrius says, in his (work) “On the Kings of Judaea” that the tribe of Judah and (those of) Benjamin and Levi were not taken captive by Sennacherib, but from this captivity to the last (captivity), which Nebuchadnezzar effected out of Jerusalem, (there were) 128 years and 6 months.
2. But from the time when the ten tribes of Samaria were taken captive to that of Ptolemy IV, there were 573 years and 9 months. But from the time (of the captivity) of Jerusalem (to Ptolemy IV), there were 338 years (and) 3 months.

Despite the fact that the chronological data of Demetrius yield some problems<sup>69</sup>, it nevertheless can be taken for granted that he had knowledge of the Book of Kings.

Only a few fragments of Artapanus’ *On the Jews*, written in the third century BCE, survived in Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.*<sup>70</sup> Artapanus appropriated traditions on Abraham, Joseph and Moses to the Hellenistic culture and art of history-writing.<sup>71</sup> He tells his reader that Abraham – when in Egypt<sup>72</sup> – revealed the secrets of astrology to Pharaoh.<sup>73</sup> Moses is characterized as the tutor and master of Orpheus.<sup>74</sup> And there are more references of this kind. Besides, the text of Artapanus makes clear that he was aware of the present order of the Pentateuch.

The evidence of all these examples could even be turned topsy turvy. In case the Hebrew Bible would have emerged in the Hellenistic era, its contents would have had more examples of this kind of appropriation to Hellenistic culture.

### 3.8. Connections with Herodotus, *Histories*<sup>75</sup>

Of great importance for the hypothesis of a Hellenistic background of the Hebrew Bible are the – assumed – connections between the *Enneateuch* or

<sup>69</sup> See Holladay, *Fragments*, 90-91; J. Hanson, ‘Demetrius the Chronographer’, in: J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* Volume 2, New York 1985, 854.

<sup>70</sup> See Holladay, *Fragments*, 1, 189-243; Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings*, 166-68.

<sup>71</sup> See, e.g., Van der Horst, ‘Interpretation’, 148-152; Grabbe, *Judaism*, 237.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Gen. 12:10-20.

<sup>73</sup> Artapanus, *Fragm.* 1; Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.*, IX 18:1.

<sup>74</sup> *Fragm.* 3; Eusebius, *Praep. Ev.*, IX 27:4; see also Holladay, *Fragments*, 232.

<sup>75</sup> Very informative are the essays by H. M. Barstad, ‘Deuteronomists, Persians, Greeks, and the Dating of the Israelite Tradition’, in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Did Moses Speak Attic? Jewish Historiography and Scripture in the Hellenistic Period* (JSOT Sup 317; ESHM 3), Sheffield 2001, 47-77; Barstad, ‘Is the Hebrew Bible a Hellenistic Book?’.

'Primary History'<sup>76</sup> with the *Historiae* of Herodotus.<sup>77</sup> Lemche writes: "The writers who invented the "History of Israel" seem to have modelled their history on a Greek pattern".<sup>78</sup> Nielsen stresses the similarities in the descriptions of tragedy and assumes that the Hebrew writers adopted these features from their Greek example.<sup>79</sup> According to Wesselius the *Enneateuch* or the Primary History was composed in the end of the fifth century BCE using Herodotus' *Histories* as a blueprint. His argument starts with the observation that both literary complexes are composed of nine books. Next to that he points at a few dozen similarities. I will mention a few. Both Joseph and Cyrus lived in exile before reaching a powerful position. Both Xerxes and Moses crossed the water border between two continents as on dry land. The structure of the genealogy of the Persian/Median royal family resembles that of the patriarchs. Joseph and Cyrus are in about the same position in the composition: at the second part of the first book. In a next step, Wesselius transforms these similarities at the level of literary *topoi* into what he calls 'structural elements' that were taken over from an existing literary work into a new one. Next, he declares that the *Histories* are more original which would imply a date for the composition of the Primary History after the completion of Herodotus' work. He then pays attention to the 'Jewish' colony at Elephantine in Southern Egypt. Aramaic documents from the fifth century BCE make clear that in Elephantine a pluralistic cult for YHWH existed including the veneration of Anath-Bethel; Herem-Bethel and other divine beings. By the end of the fifth century BCE, however, a letter was sent to Jerusalem asking for instructions as to the correct way of celebrating Passover. The answer to that letter contains instructions that concur with the texts from the Primary History. Wesselius then draws the conclusion that this sudden shift in the religion in Elephantine should be construed as a parallel to a shift that took place in Jerusalem in the end of the fifth century BCE when the Primary History was introduced as a religious text formative for the emerging Judaism.

As such, there is nothing against the search for analogies and similarities. The question, however, is to the character of the analogies and their weight for the argument. I would like to refer to three problems:

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<sup>76</sup> Gen. 1 – 2 Kgs. 25.

<sup>77</sup> For the thesis see Van Seters, 'Histories and Historians of the Ancient Near East', 137-85; Van Seters, *In Search of History*; Nielsen, *Tragedy in History*; Wesselius, 'Discontinuity, Congruence and the Making of the Hebrew Bible', 24-77; J. W. Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus' Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOT Sup 345), Sheffield 2002; radicalised by Bolin, 'When the End is the Beginning', 14-15; Lemche, 'The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?', 183; Lemche, *Vorgeschichte*, 212-18; Thompson, *Bible in History*, 267-92.

<sup>78</sup> Lemche, 'The Old Testament – A Hellenistic Book?', 183.

<sup>79</sup> Nielsen, *Tragedy in History*, 164.

1. On the character of the analogies. In 2001, Hans Barstad published an essay<sup>80</sup> in which he made a clear distinction between ‘historical’ and ‘typological’ similarities. A fine example of historical similarity is formed by the likeness of the curses in Deut. 28 and the stipulations in the Neo-Assyrians vassal treaties and loyalty oaths. They function in a very comparable context and are not asymmetrical in character.<sup>81</sup> This implies that Assyrian influence on the concept of covenant is more than likely. Typological similarities are of a different character. Job 3 as well as Jer. 20 narrates that the ‘I’ character involved has reached such a miserable position that he wished that he was never born. Here, the contexts are different and literary influence is to be excluded. There is only a thematical similarity. In my view, the similarities displayed by Wesseliuss are of a ‘typological’ character. Many of them can be classified as literary motifs that are to be expected in these kind of texts.
2. On the *comparability* of analogies within the different works. Wesseliuss refers to various similarities throughout both literary corpses. The distribution of these similarities over the two bodies is, however, very unequal. In the Primary History they are mainly spotted in Genesis, Exodus, Deuteronomy and Samuel. In the *Histories* they are restricted to the Books I, II and VIII. The comparison in the depictions of Moses and Xerxes are interesting. Both figures, however, are portrayed at different spots in their compositions (Exodus versus Book VII). This observation as such undermines the view that the *Histories* served as a structural *Vorlage* to the Primary History. Next, Wesseliuss does not account for the asymmetrical character of many of his similarities. Very important to him is the similarity that both Moses and Xerxes lead their people across the sea separating two continents as if on dry lands. Apart from the question whether our present day concept of ‘continent’ suits fifth century BCE geographical ideas, it should be noted that Xerxes and Moses are not cast in the same role: Xerxes is a conqueror who failed in the end, Moses a successful liberator; Xerxes brought an army to the other side of sea, Moses his own people; The direction of Xerxes was away from his homeland, Moses was directing to the promised land. These kinds of remarks can be made by almost all of Wesseliuss’ similarities.

<sup>80</sup> Barstad, ‘Deuteronomists, Persians, Greeks, and the Dating of the Israelite Tradition’.

<sup>81</sup> See H. U. Steymans, *Deuteronomium 28 und die adê zur Thronfolgeregelung Asarhaddons: Segen und Fluch im Alten Orient und in Israel* (OBO 145), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1995; H. U. Steymans, ‘Die literarische und historische Bedeutung der Thronfolgevereidigung Asarhaddons’, in: M. Witte *et al.* (eds.), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur „Deuteronomismus“-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (BZAW 365), Berlin-New York 2006, 331-49, with the interesting remarks by K. Radner, ‘Assyrische *tuppi adê* als Vorbild für Deuteronomium 28, 20-44?’, in: Witte *et al.* (eds.), *Deuteronomistische Geschichtswerke*, 351-78.

3. On the *probability* of the analogies. Assume that analogies were found between Herodotus and the Finnish national epic *Kalevala*<sup>82</sup>, as Barstad hinted at similarities between Herodotus and the foundation histories of Ireland around 1900.<sup>83</sup> In view of the great distance in time, no serious scholar would ever assume literary interdependence between the *Kalevala* and the *Historiae*.

The parallels between Herodotus and the Hebrew Bible are of too general a character to classify them as ‘historical’. The tragic elements in both works are good examples of ‘typological’ similarities. Besides: tragedy as human conduct is perennial. In my view, the similarities between both texts do not supply an argument for literary dependence. Neither an influence from Herodotus on the Bible, nor the other way around<sup>84</sup> is plausible.

#### 4. Conclusion

Above, I have argued that the Hellenistic hypothesis is not very plausible. Alternatively, I would plead for a greater Mesopotamian influence in the Hebrew Bible. Morton Smith hinted already at the fact that greater parts of the Hebrew Bible shared the ‘common theology of the Ancient Near East’.<sup>85</sup> His plea has been reinforced by research in the area of history-writing<sup>86</sup>, ethics<sup>87</sup> and divination-prophecy.<sup>88</sup> All this implies that I will follow more or less mainstream Old Testament scholarship in the next articles in which I will ponder – *inter alii* – on the balance between ‘story’ and ‘history’.

<sup>82</sup> As collected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Elias Lönnrot. English translation: *The Kalevala* (Translated by Keith Bosley), Oxford 1999. On the text see, e.g., B. Collinder, *The Kalevala and its Background*, Stockholm 1964.

<sup>83</sup> Barstad, ‘History and the Hebrew Bible’, 56-57.

<sup>84</sup> As proposed by S. Mandell, D. N. Freedman, *The Relationship between Herodotus’ History and the Primary History* (South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism 60), Atlanta 1993.

<sup>85</sup> M. Smith, ‘The Common Theology of the Ancient Near East’, *JBL* 71 (1952), 135-47.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. B. Albrektson, *History and the Gods: An Essay on the Idea of Historical Events as Divine Manifestations in the Ancient Near East and in Israel* (CB OT 1), Lund 1967.

<sup>87</sup> See K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia: A Comparative Study* (SSN 22), Assen Maastricht 1985; Otto, *Ethik*.

<sup>88</sup> See esp. M. Nissinen, *References to Prophecy in Neo-Assyrian Sources* (SAAS 7), Helsinki 1998.



## Chapter II: Elijah at Mount Horeb Reading 1 Kings 19:9-18\*

### *1. Introduction*

In 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 an encounter of the prophet Elijah with the divine is narrated. On his flight for queen Jezebel, the prophet reaches the Mountain of the Lord after forty days the Mountain of the Lord. This story in the Book of Kings contains an interesting repetition. The words of 1 Kgs. 9:9b-10 are repeated almost verbally at 1 Kgs. 9:13b-14:

- 9b//13b    And, behold, the word<sup>1</sup> of YHWH came to him,  
              and he said to him<sup>2</sup>:  
              ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’  
10//14    And he said:  
              ‘I have been very jealous for YHWH, the God of hosts:  
              for the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant,<sup>3</sup>  
              thrown down your altars,  
              and slain your prophets with the sword;  
              and I, I alone, am left;  
              and they seek my life, to take it away.

It makes a tortuous impression that before and after the theophany in the ‘still, small voice’ the same dialogue between YHWH and Elijah would have taken place. When assuming a narrative technique in which the temporal dimension is linear, then it is bewildering that already before this theophany a dialogue between YHWH and Elijah could take place, unless one accepts with Von Nordheim that both dialogues have a different inten-

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\* This chapter is based on B. Becking, ‘Elia op de Horeb’, *NedTT* 41 (1987), 177-86.

<sup>1</sup> 13b: ‘a voice’.

<sup>2</sup> The word אֵלָיו, ‘to him’, is absent in 13b; in some Hebrew Manuscripts as well as LXX it is also absent in 9b.

<sup>3</sup> LXX seems to have read כִּי מִזְבֵּחַ, see R. M. Frank, ‘A Note on 3 Kings 19:10.14’, *CBQ* 25 (1963), 410-14; H.-J. Stipp, *Elischa – Propheten – Gottesmänner: Die Kompositionsgeschichte des Elischazyklus und verwandter Texte, rekonstruiert auf der Basis von Text- und Literaturkritik zu 1 Kön 20,22 und 2 Kön 2-7* (ATSAT 24), St Ottilien 1987, 31.250; J. Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision: A Literary and Redaction-Critical Study on the Elijah Narratives 1 Kings 17-19* (SESJ 80), Göttingen 2001, 143.

tion,<sup>4</sup> or with Volgger that two dialogues took place: one inside the cave and one after the theophany.<sup>5</sup> These observations have yielded various interpreters to assume literary-critical divisions within 1 Kgs. 19:9-18. Others try to explain this repetition within the literary coherence of the unit.

Wellhausen has offered the easiest literary-critical solution. In a footnote to his introduction to the literary emergence of the Old Testament, he states without argument that the dialogue preceding the theophany is a secondary insertion.<sup>6</sup> Later, more complex proposals as to the emergence of 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 have been made:

1. Jepsen isolates a frame-story (9abα, 11aα, 13a) from two secondary descriptions of theophany. In his view, the description of the divine revelation has been transmitted in two different ways. 1 Kgs. 19:9bβ.10.11aβγ.12 is the final result of the first process of transmitting, while 13b-18 is the literary deposit of the other tradition. The two identical dialogues have been transmitted independently. A redactor placed them next to one another.<sup>7</sup>
2. Fohrer<sup>8</sup> and Steck<sup>9</sup> created an even more complicated picture of the literary emergence of the unit. They both construe the first dialogue between the prophet and YHWH as a late gloss by the final redactor. A comparable view has been proposed by Würthwein, in that he ascribes much of the material in 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 to exilic and post-exilic Deuter-

<sup>4</sup> E. von Nordheim, 'Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf (Elia am Horeb)', *Bibl* 59 (1978), 160-62, 166-67; E. von Nordheim, *Die Selbstbehauptung Israels in der Welt des Alten Orients* (OBO 115), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1992, 137-40, 145-46, see below.

<sup>5</sup> D. Volgger, *Verbindliche Tora am einzigen Tempel: Zu Motiv und Ort der Komposition von 1-2. Kön.* (ATSAT 61), St Ottilien 1998, 183; see also H. Jagersma, *1 Konigen 2* (Verklaring van de Hebreeuwse Bijbel), Kampen 2006, 186-93.

<sup>6</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Die Composition des Hexateuch und der historische Bücher des Alten Testaments*, Berlin <sup>4</sup>1963, 282 n. 1; his position is adapted by, e.g., O. Eissfeldt, *Der Gott Karmel*, Berlin 1954, 31; J. A. Montgomery, H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh 1951, 313; J. J. Stamm, 'Elia am Horeb', in: W. C. van Unnik, A. S. van der Woude (eds.), *Studia Biblica et Semitica* (FS Vriezen), Wageningen 1966, 329; G. Hentschel, *Die Elijaerzählungen: Zum Verhältnis von historischen Geschehen und geschichtlicher Erfahrung* (Erfurter Theologische Studien 33), Leipzig 1977, 76-77; S. Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israels im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (FRLANT 124), Göttingen 1982, 105-107. H. A. Brongers, *1 Konigen* (POT), Nijkerk 1967, 191, considers 13b-14 to be secondary.

<sup>7</sup> A. Jepsen, *Nabi: Soziologische Studien zur alttestamentlichen Literatur- und Religionsgeschichte*, München 1934, 62-64.

<sup>8</sup> G. Fohrer, *Elia* (AThANT 53), Zürich <sup>2</sup>1968, 21-24, 38-40.

<sup>9</sup> O. H. Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte in den Elia-Erzählungen* (WMANT 26), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, 20-28.

onomists, while Fohrer and Steck take most of the material as pre-exilic.<sup>10</sup>

3. A third position is taken by Schmoldt who argues that the description of the theophany is secondary and inserted in the earlier story under *Wiederaufnahme* of the dialogue.<sup>11</sup>

In the literary-critical approach, one question remains unsolved: Why did a later redactor place the first dialogue at this specific place in the composition before the theophany? Has this later redactor been unaware of the problems he yielded by his composition? Or was he just a clumsy clerk bringing material on Elijah at the Horeb together? Related to this problem is the question on function and intention of the first dialogue within the framework of the (final) redactor of the unit.

Over against the literary-critical approach, Carlson stated that this approach contains a misjudgement of the literary and ideological character of the stories on Elijah. With 'literary character' he refers – among other things – to the fact that 'repetition' is a repeated literary technique within the stories on Elijah. 1 Kgs. 17–19 is characterised and structured by this technique. With 'ideological character' he refers to his observation of a contrast between the way in which YHWH reveals himself – i.e. by way of the divine דבר – and the way in which Baal makes himself known. According to Carlson, 1 Kgs. 19 is a coherent unit that has been part of the greater unit of the stories on Elijah.<sup>12</sup> A comparable, but more sophisticated view can be found in Vorndran's article. He argues that the repetition of the dialogue should be read as the outcome of a literary technique that toyed with the synonyms יהוה – קול – קול דממה דקה – דבר יהוה.<sup>13</sup>

According to Von Nordheim, 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 is a literary unit. The repetition of the dialogue is explained by him in assuming that both dialogues have a different intention. With the first dialogue YHWH asks the prophet why he has left his prophetic working grounds and has deviated to the far South. The answer by Elijah underscores that he considers his mission as a prophet as a failure and that he wants to give up his office. The revelation

<sup>10</sup> E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD, 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 223-32; M. Beck, *Elia und die Monolatrie: Ein Beitrag zur religionsgeschichtlichen Rückfrage nach dem vorschriftprophetischen Jahwe-Glauben* (BZAW 281), Berlin-New York 1999, 127-29; Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision*, 142-82.

<sup>11</sup> H. Schmoldt, 'Elijas Begegnung mit Jahwä', *BN* 43 (1988), 19-26.

<sup>12</sup> R. A. Carlson, 'Élie à l'Horeb', *VT* 19 (1969), 416-39; see also B. S. Childs, 'On Reading the Elijah Narratives', *Interpretation* 34 (1980), 128-37; R. L. Cohn, 'The Literary Logic of 1 Kings 17-19', *JBL* 101 (1982), 333-50; D. D. Herr, 'Variations of a Pattern: 1 Kings 19', *JBL* 104 (1985), 292-94; F. J. M. Maeijer, *Elisha as a Second Elijah*, Apeldoorn 1989, 6-9; A. J. Hauser, 'Yahweh versus Death – The Real Struggle in 1 Kings 17-19', in: A. J. Hauser, R. Gregory (eds.), *From Carmel to Horeb: Elijah in Crisis* (JSOT Sup 85; BLS 19), Sheffield 1990, 67-77; R. Gregory, 'Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah', in: Hauser, Gregory (eds.), *From Carmel to Horeb*, 131-35.

<sup>13</sup> J. Vorndran, 'Elijas Dialog mit Jahwes Wort und Stimme', *Bibl* 77 (1996), 417-24.

of God in the still small voice refers to the view that YHWH, and not Baal, has the last word in history. With this revelation God runs counter to Elijah's state of despair and failure. It comes as a surprise, however, that Elijah refuses to act again as a prophet of YHWH. The repeated question receives the very same answer. This leads to a threefold mission that as such creates the end of Elijah being a prophet.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, Von Nordheim presents a meaningful interpretation of 1 Kgs. 19:9-18. In my view, there is yet another possibility to explain the repetition of the dialogue.

Finally, it should be noted that some scholars see no problem whatsoever in the repetition of the dialogue.<sup>15</sup>

## 2. *Nachholende Erzählung or retrospective achrony*

In imitation of Lohfink<sup>16</sup>, Wolff<sup>17</sup> and Van der Woude<sup>18</sup> have observed in the Book of Jonah examples of the literary technique of *Nachholende Erzählung*. This literary technique contains the disruption of the linear line of time within a narrative. The chronological order is left aside. Instead of a chronological sequence of events, the final outcome of a story is narrated first, the route that lead to that outcome thereafter. Jonah 3:5 narrates the final reaction of the inhabitants of Nineveh to the prophecy of doom. The next four verses narrate how their repentance came into being, namely by an edict of the king. The Hebrew verb-forms in Jonah 3:6-8 should be construed as *plusquamperfect*. This technique, not uncommon in modern novels, is also attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Von Nordheim, 'Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf', esp. 159-70; Von Nordheim, *Selbstbehauptung Israels*, 137-49; see also B. O. Long, *1 Kings with an Introduction to Historical Literature* (FOTL 9), Grand Rapids 1984, 199-200.

<sup>15</sup> E.g., J. R. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as a Project of Social Identity* (JSOT Sup 272), Sheffield 1998, 183; S. Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa: Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen* (BWANT 152), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 2001, 186-87; M. Cogan, *1 Kings* (AB 10), New York 2001, 457; D. Pruin, *Geschichten und Geschichte: Isebel als literarische und historische Gestalt* (OBO 222), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 2006, 287-89.

<sup>16</sup> N. Lohfink, 'Jona ging zur Stadt hinaus (Jon 4,5)', *BZ NF* 5 (1961), 185-203; Jagersma, *1 Konigen* 2, 186-93.

<sup>17</sup> H. W. Wolff, *Dodekapropheten 3 Obadja und Jona* (BK, XIV,3), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1977, 85, 120, 136.

<sup>18</sup> A. S. van der Woude, *Jona Nahum* (POT), Nijkerk 1978, 11-12, 22, 28-29, 47-48, 56-57; A. S. van der Woude, 'Nachholende Erzählung im Buch Jona', in: A. Rofé, Y. Zakovitch (eds.), *Isac Leo Seeligman Volume: Essays on the Bible and the Ancient World* 3, Jerusalem 1983, 263-72.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., Gen. 37:1-11; Josh. 2:16; 2 Sam. 12:26ff; 1 Kgs. 2:7; 9:15ff. 2 Kgs. 24:7; Ruth 1:6; with W. J. Martin, '"Dischronologized" Narrative', in: *Congress Volume Rome 1968* (VT Sup 17), Leiden 1968, 179-86; B. Becking, '"They Hated Him Even More": Literary Technique in Genesis 37:1-11', *BN* 60 (1991), 40-47; see also M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto-Buffalo-London 1985, 56-73.

The textual unit 1 Kgs. 19:9-14 can be construed as written with the technique of retrospective achrony. The *Nachholende Erzählung* starts with verse 11 and continues up to verse 14. The relation between the narrative time and the narrated time is clarified in Fig. 1.

This brings me to the following remarks on some elements within the story.

- 9a This clause contains a short introduction. It links on in subject matter to 1 Kgs. 19:1-8. The adverb  $\text{עַל־הָהָר}$ , twice mentioned, refers to the mountain of Horeb. This is an indication that the contents of the following episode should be construed as located on that mountain.

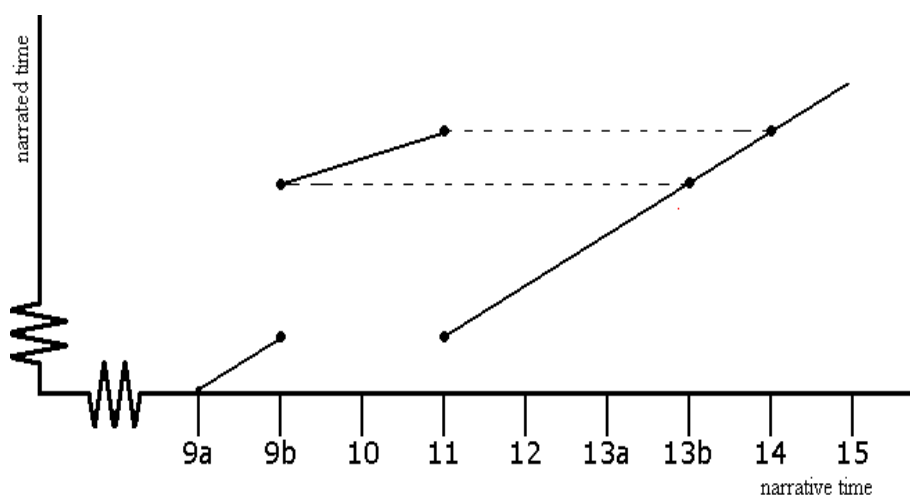


Fig. 1. *The relation between narrative time and narrated time in 1 Kgs. 19*

- 9b-10 This element contains a dialogue between YHWH and the prophet Elijah. YHWH is asking what might have caused Elijah to come to the mountain. Elijah answers that despite the ardour with which he has pursued his ministry, the people of Israel have gone other ways. The description of the opposition has a hyperbolic character.<sup>20</sup> The dialogue does not come to an end here. The answer by YHWH to the complaint of the prophet will be found in vss. 15-18. Before that answer is given to the reader, it firstly will be narrated *how* the encounter with the divine came into being.

<sup>20</sup> See Brongers, *I Koningen*, 195; J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London <sup>3</sup>1977, 410; Hauser, 'Yahweh versus Death', 67-69.

11-13a The verb-forms in these verses should be construed as *plusquam-perfect*. It is narrated that the theophany did not take place in wind, earthquake or fire, but through a ‘still small voice’. The meaning of קל דממה דקה will be explored below.

13b-14 Within the *Nachholende Erzählung* the dialogue is repeated. The element of repetition is attested elsewhere in texts that should be construed as containing retrospective achrony.<sup>21</sup> The repetition demarcates the beginning and the end of the achronological loop. The content of the dialogue is almost the same as in 9b-10. There is one interesting difference, though, that is observable in the introduction to the dialogue:

9b And, behold, the word of YHWH came to him

13b And, behold, a voice came to him

‘The word of YHWH’ and ‘a voice’ are synonymous parallels, albeit in that way that ‘the word of YHWH’ should be seen as an interpretation of ‘a voice’. The author of this story used a noun in vs. 13b, קול, ‘a voice’, in order to link this verse with the preceding קול in the ‘still small voice’ (12b). The fact that the more interpretative דבר יהוה, ‘the word of YHWH’, is placed in front, might reveal one of the intentions of this story: The proper theophany is to be found in the דבר יהוה, ‘the word of YHWH’.<sup>22</sup>

15-18 Here, YHWH is introduced as a speaking character (ויאמר יהוה, 15a). This part of the story contains the divine answer to the complaint and the crisis of Elijah. The prophet receives a new mission that will imply the end of his prophetic office. Meanwhile, by anointing Hazael, Jehu and Elisha, the exertion of YHWH with Israel will continue. And it turns out that Elijah should not construe himself as completely isolated: 7,000 persons in Israel ‘did not bow their knees for Baal’.

In using the literary technique of *Nachholende Erzählung* the beginning of the dialogue between YHWH and Elijah has been placed in front of the story leading to anachrony at the surface level of the story. In doing so the author shows that he wants to put stress on the idea that Elijah is encountering YHWH as a prophet doubting the sense and meaning of his mission. In my view, the author thus indicates that the story in 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 should be read as a story on the victory over the idea that the work of YHWH is a failure. This victory is not reached by the revelation as such. The theophany opens the lane for Elijah to express his bitter feelings of failure. It is only

<sup>21</sup> See Gen. 37:1-11 and Jonah 4.

<sup>22</sup> See Vorndran, ‘Elijahs Dialog’, 420; for a slightly different view see Maeijer, *Elisha as a Second Elijah*, 8.

the divine answer to this complaint that makes clear what progress is possible.

### 3. The contrast of the 'still small voice'

The description of the way in which YHWH reveals himself to Elijah is characterised by a contrast.<sup>23</sup> First, three elementary forces of nature are depicted – storm, fire, earthquake – each time leading to the observation that YHWH was absent in them. Then a 'still small voice' is heard.

It has often been remarked that these three elements, רוח, 'wind or storm', אש, 'fire', and רעש, 'earthquake', are attested in descriptions of the theophany, both in the Hebrew Bible and in contemporary and comparable texts from the Ancient Near East.<sup>24</sup> It is assumed that in the common theology of the Ancient Near East storm, fire, earthquake were experienced as signs of the revelation of the divine. Sometimes, storm, fire, earthquake were construed as the deeds and doings of a god as such, and sometimes they were seen as the introduction to a divine revelation. Von Nordheim is of the opinion that storm, fire, earthquake especially played a role in the depictions of the revelation of the Canaanite god of the (thunder)storm Baal/Hadad.<sup>25</sup>

The author of 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 stresses his view that YHWH is not revealing himself in these three elementary forces of nature, but that YHWH is present in the קול דקה דממה. The translation of these words is still in discussion.<sup>26</sup> Slightly arbitrary, I present my own view:

<sup>23</sup> See already J. Jeremias, *Theophanie: Die Geschichte einer alttestamentliche Gattung* (WMANT 10), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1965, 114-15; Hentschel, *Eliaerzählungen*, 74; J. A. Todd, 'The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah-Cycle', in: R. B. Coote (ed.), *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective* (SBL Semeia Studies 22), Atlanta 1992, 25-26; Jagersma, *1 Konigen 2*, 188-89. Stamm, 'Elia am Horeb', disagrees with this view.

<sup>24</sup> See esp. Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 78-89; Von Nordheim, 'Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf', 162-68; Maeijer, *Elisha as a Second Elijah*, 8; Von Nordheim, *Selbstbehauptung Israels*, 140-45; Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision*, 147-55; Jagersma, *1 Konigen 2*, 188-89, and the critical remarks below in 2.4.

<sup>25</sup> Von Nordheim, 'Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf', 163; see also Pruin, *Geschichten und Geschichte*, 287-89.

<sup>26</sup> Important voices in the debate are: P. A. H. de Boer, 'Notes on Text and Meaning of Isaiah xxxviii 9-20', *OTS* 9 (1951), 179; Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 65, 112-15; Stamm, 'Elia am Horeb', 330-31; J. Lust, 'A gentle breeze and a roaring thunderous storm', *VT* 25 (1975), 110-15; Y. Zakovitch, 'A Still Small Voice – Form and Content of 1 Kg 19', *Tarbiz* 51 (1981/82), 329-46; M. Masson, 'L'expérience mystique du prophète Elie: "qol d'mama daqqa"', *RHR* 208 (1991), 243-71; Volgger, *Verbindliche Tora*, 181-82; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 453; Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision*, 151-52; Pruin, *Geschichten und Geschichte*, 253.

- קול This noun refers to ‘voice; sound; rumour; whispering’ without indicating as such the character, the quality or the identity of that sound.<sup>27</sup>
- דממה As in Ps. 107:29, this noun means ‘calm; windless’.<sup>28</sup> The noun is derived from the verb דמם I, ‘to be silent; cease’.<sup>29</sup>
- דקה The adjective דק signifies ‘thin; small; scanty’ and is derived from a verb דקק, ‘to pulverise’. In 1 Kgs. 19:12 the adjective has as its meaning ‘drained; emptied; tenuous’.

After the three elementary forces of nature, a windlessness appears emptied from all power and movement. Nevertheless, a voice is heard that appears to communicate the word of YHWH.

The question as to the meaning of this contrast can be answered in two different ways:

1. What function does it have within the literary composition of 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 as outlined above? It turns out that 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 can be read as a story on divine victory over Elijah’s emotions of failure. Despite the display of divine power at the Carmel, Elijah has the impression that he alone has survived as a servant of YHWH. Elijah has the idea that someone other than YHWH is in divine command. The function of the contrast between forces of nature and the windless voice then can be described as underscoring that storm, fire, earthquake, traditional instruments in the hand of Baal, are unable to help Elijah to find room and rest for an existential complaint as well as to find an answer to that complaint. It is only the still small voice that opens the possibility of a real encounter.
2. What function does the contrast under consideration have within the greater unit of the stories on Elijah (1 Kgs. 17–19)? An answer to this question depends on the answer to two other problems: (a) What is the position of 1 Kgs. 19:9-18 within this greater literary whole? (b) do ‘storm, fire, and earthquake’ really refer to the deity Baal?

#### 4. Forces of nature

The question whether ‘storm, fire, and earthquake’ really refer to the deity Baal, seems to be superfluous. Many exegetes have given parallels between ‘storm, fire, and earthquake’ and texts on Baal/Hadad from the Ancient Near East.<sup>30</sup> A closer look, however, reveals that these parallels are rather

<sup>27</sup> HAL, 1013-15.

<sup>28</sup> DCH 2, 452.

<sup>29</sup> DCH 2, 450-51.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., Hentschel, *Elijaerzählungen*, 74-75; Von Nordheim, ‘Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf’, 163-64; Von Nordheim, *Selbstbehauptung Israels*, 140-45; Würthwein, *Könige*, 230; Long, *1 Kings*, 200-01; C. Macholz, ‘Psalm 29 und 1. Könige 19: Jahwes und



vague. They generally consist in a reference to the section ‘Einflüsse aus der Umwelt Israels’ in Jeremias’s monograph on theophany.<sup>31</sup> There, Jeremias has listed various parallels – mainly from Ugarit and Mesopotamia – to the accompanying phenomena in nature when gods were appearing. It should be noted that an exact parallel to 1 Kgs. 19:11-12 is not listed in that section. Therefore, a closer look at the three elements mentioned in 1 Kgs. 19:11-12, is needed:

רוח ‘Wind; breath; spirit’ occurs quite often in the Hebrew Bible. It is only in two other instances, Ezek. 1:4 and Dan. 7:2, that the noun is used in the context of the description of a theophany. It is remarkable that in other texts where the appearance of YHWH ‘in a (storm)wind’ is depicted, the noun שַׁעַר is used preferably.<sup>32</sup> Another remarkable feature is the fact that although a cognate *rḥ* does occur in other Westsemitic languages, Ugaritic; Aramaic and Phoenician, this noun is never used in depictions of the theophany. Akkadian inscriptions contain epithets for the stormgod Hadad, such as *bēl šāri u birqi*, ‘lord of wind and thunder’, but here too the terminology differs from the one in 1 Kgs. 19. These observations lead to the conclusion that the element ‘wind’, phrased with רוח, has a somewhat isolated position within the Ancient Near Eastern depictions of the theophany as a whole. This implies that a connection with a Canaanite stormgod Baal/Hadad should be construed as premature.

רעש ‘Earthquake’ is a common element in the descriptions of the theophany in the Hebrew Bible. Quite often the verb רָעַשׁ, ‘to shake; quake’, has been used for this description<sup>33</sup> and sometimes the noun רַעַשׁ, ‘earthquake’, is used.<sup>34</sup> In Ugaritic, neither the noun nor the verb *r’š* is attested. In the Baal epic, one description of the quaking of the earth in the context of the theophany of Baal is given:

31 *qlh.q[dš.t]rr. 'arš* His h[oly] voice made the earth [m]ove

32 [*š'at.spt*]h[.]grm [the utterance of] his [lips] the mountains<sup>35</sup>

Note that a different verb, *trr*, has been used.

אש ‘fire’, occurs in the Hebrew Bible in the language of the theophany of YHWH.<sup>36</sup> Well known is the divine fire at Mount Sinai (Exod.

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Baals Theophanie’, in: R. Albertz *et al.* (eds.), *Werden und Wirken des Alten Testaments* (FS C. Westermann), Göttingen 1980, 329-33; Todd, ‘The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah-Cycle’, 25-26.

<sup>31</sup> Jeremias, *Theophanie*, 73-90.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., Nah. 1:3; Zech. 9:14; Isa. 66:15; Job 38:1; 40:6.

<sup>33</sup> E.g., Judg. 5:4; 2 Sam. 22:8 = Ps. 18:8; Jer. 10:10; Nah. 1:5; Ps. 46:4; 68:9; 77:19.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Kgs. 19:11; Isa. 29:6.

<sup>35</sup> *KTU* 1.4 vii:31-32.

19:18). In Ugaritic a noun *'išt*, 'fire', is attested. This noun is, as far as I can see, never used to depict the accompanying phenomena in nature at the theophany of Baal.<sup>37</sup> In *KTU* 1.3 iii 45 the otherwise unknown goddess *'išt*, 'Ishatu/fire', is listed among the deities defeated by Anath.<sup>38</sup>

These observations and the absence of exact parallels between 1 Kgs. 19:11-12 and the Ugaritic material undermine the assumption that the contrast between 'storm, fire, and earthquake' parallels the contrast between YHWH and Baal. In my view, the narrative rejection of 'storm, fire, and earthquake' hints at something other than the rejection of the Canaanite deity Baal. Stamm has proposed a connection of 'storm, fire, and earthquake' and the forthcoming threefold anointment of Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha.<sup>39</sup> This proposal, elegant as it is, meets a problem, however. 1 Kgs. 19:11-12 stresses the *absence* of YHWH in 'storm, fire, and earthquake'. The anointing of Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha takes place commissioned by YHWH. The Book of Kings later narrates about the blessed *presence* of YHWH in the lives of these three anointed.

It seems better, therefore, to interpret the three elements 'storm, fire, and earthquake' as elements that refer back to features earlier in the story. I would like to offer a proposal in which two of the three have parallels with elements earlier in the story. This might not be convincing – a proposal that would account for all three elements would be a better solution – but my proposal leads to a meaningful interpretation of the story on the encounter with the Divine at Mount Horeb.

The story in 1 Kgs. 19 is preceded by the well known story on the competition of the gods at Mount Carmel in 1 Kgs. 18:20-46. The main narrative programme in this story is the choice between Baal and YHWH. The point of the competition is: Which deity should be venerated in Israel? Who is the true divine? The deity who will answer with fire for the sacrifice, will be god in Israel. Baal remains silent and absent. YHWH appears. In the appearance of YHWH two of the three elements from 1 Kgs. 19:11-12 play a part:

רוח 'Wind; breath; spirit'. In the aftermath of the scene on Mount Carmel that connects the scene with the 'story on drought', it becomes clear that now YHWH alone is God in Israel, an end will come to the period of dryness. This drought is presented in the story as the divine answer to the guilt of Ahab. After the story on Mount Carmel, the dryness disappears. It started with a tiny cloud, but soon 'the sky

<sup>36</sup> See Jeremias, *Theophanie*; P. D. Miller, 'Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel', *CBQ* 27 (1965), 256-61.

<sup>37</sup> See also Miller, 'Fire in the Mythology of Canaan and Israel'.

<sup>38</sup> See W. G. E. Watson, 'Fire', *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 331.

<sup>39</sup> Stamm, 'Elia am Horeb', 333-34.

grew black with clouds and wind (רוח), and there was a great rain-storm'.<sup>40</sup> In view of the context of this passage it can be assumed that for the author of the story God should be seen as the sender of 'clouds and wind'.

אש 'fire'. The noun אש occurs several times in 1 Kgs. 18:20-46. In the preparatory stages of the sacrifice it is narrated that neither the prophets of Baal nor Elijah may bring fire to the altar.<sup>41</sup> This not bringing of fire is part of the deal. Pivotal in the arrangement is that both sides agree on the following: 'the god who answers with fire, will be God.'<sup>42</sup> After a few futile efforts of the prophets of Baal, YHWH answers the prayer of Elijah: 'then the fire of YHWH fell and consumed ....'<sup>43</sup> In this story, 'fire' is not so much an element in the theophany of YHWH, but a medium through which YHWH makes himself known.

All in all, it is possible to connect the three elements 'storm, fire, and earthquake' from 1 Kgs. 19 with the two ways in which YHWH made himself known in 1 Kgs. 18.<sup>44</sup> The character of this connection depends on the general literary character of the connection between the two chapters.

### 5. General connections between 1 Kings 18 and 19

In the literary-critical and redaction-historical studies on the stories around Elijah, generally a distinction is made between 1 Kgs. 18 and 19. It is almost *cummunis opinio* that the traditions on Elijah have been transmitted independent from the other material in 1 and 2 Kgs. Within the stories on Elijah several independent traditions and or redactions are assumed.<sup>45</sup> As regards the connection between 1 Kgs. 18 and 19, Fohrer remarked that 1 Kgs. 19 is 'weder die Fortsetzung noch das Gegenstück von 17-18'.<sup>46</sup> These scholars observe feature within 1 Kgs. 17-19 that they cannot interpret as stemming from one author or redactor.

Recent studies, however, plead for the literary coherence of 1 Kgs. 17-19.<sup>47</sup> The arguments for such a coherence are sometimes superficial, but

<sup>40</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:45.

<sup>41</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:23, 25.

<sup>42</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:24.

<sup>43</sup> 1 Kgs. 18:38.

<sup>44</sup> See also Hauser, 'Yahweh versus Death', 69-70.

<sup>45</sup> E.g., by Fohrer, *Elia*; Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte*; Hentschel, *Elijaerzählungen*; Beck, *Elia und die Monolatrie*; Keinänen, *Traditions in Collision*.

<sup>46</sup> Fohrer, *Elia*, 28.

<sup>47</sup> Carlson, 'Élie à l'Horeb'; Von Nordheim, 'Ein Prophet kündigt sein Amt auf', esp. 171; D. Jobling, *The Sense of Biblical Narrative* (JSOT Sup 7), Sheffield 1978, 63-88; Childs, 'On Reading the Elijah Narratives'; Cohn, 'Literary Logic'; Herr, 'Variations of a Pat-

nevertheless convincing in such a way that I will accept the coherence of 1 Kgs. 17–19. My proposal to interpret the three elements ‘storm, fire, and earthquake’ from 1 Kgs. 19 as *kataphoric* elements referring backwards to features in 1 Kgs. 18 reinforces this assumption.

### 6. A final remark

On the basis of this assumption, I would like to interpret the contrast between the absence of YHWH in the three elements ‘storm, fire, and earthquake’ and his presence in the ‘still, small voice’. The character of the revelation of YHWH to Elijah at Mount Horeb can be construed as a symbolic correction.<sup>48</sup> After the story at Mount Carmel, the idea could arise that YHWH, like Baal, is a deity that makes himself known through the forces of nature. With the story on Elijah at Mount Horeb, the author of 1 Kgs. 17–19 makes clear that YHWH is above all a deity that reveals himself in speaking albeit through a subtle and small voice. This symbolic, or theological correction is not so much a denial of a theology implied in the traditional theophany. The correction functions as follows. At a decisive moment in the story on Elijah – that parallels a decisive moment in the (hi)story of Israel – it is YHWH who by speaking through the still, small voice breaks the deadlock. This correction shows that YHWH is a deity in yet another way than Baal. In order to make this clear, the author of 1 Kgs. 17–19 applied the literary technique of *Nachholende Erzählung* that stresses the most important feature by putting ‘And, behold, the word of YHWH came to him’ in front of the pericope 1 Kgs. 19:9–18.

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tern’; Maeijer, *Elisha as a Second Elijah*; Hauser, ‘Yahweh versus Death’; Gregory, ‘Irony and the Unmasking of Elijah’; Von Nordheim, *Selbstbehauptung Israels*, 129–53; Todd, ‘The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah-Cycle’; Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings*, 182–83; Cogan, *1 Kings*, 92–94; Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*; Jagersma, *1 Konigen 2*, 134–97.

<sup>48</sup> See also Vorndran, ‘Elijas Dialog’, 424; Beck, *Elia und die Monolatrie*, 138–39.

# Chapter III: No More Grapes from the Vineyard? A Plea for a Historical-Critical Approach in the Study of the Old Testament<sup>\*</sup>

## 1. Introduction

At the national memorial for the victims of the Second World War in 1998, the Dutch novelist Adriaan van Dis read a plea for a historical approach to the events in Europe and Asia in the middle of this century. The aim of his plea was clear to me: He wanted to stop the ongoing process of myth-making both in the field of heroic roles for the resistance and for the amount of sorrow people had to suffer. To demythologize personal roles and to end the fruitless and useless competition about whose amount of sorrow had been greater and more dehumanizing – the hunger in the great cities in the last year of the war or the suffering in the Japanese concentration camps – he made a plea for an objective reconstruction of the events so that later generations could know what really happened. This plea surprised and astonished me for, at least, three reasons.

1. There already exists a 30-volume description of the period under consideration. These books are well documented, scholarly written and give the reader a balanced view on the events.<sup>1</sup>
2. However, I do agree with Van Dis when it comes to the role of individual and collective memory for reconstructing history. As Loftus and Loftus<sup>2</sup> have shown, memory is limited and – what is more important –

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Since the theme of this paper touches a variety of topics, I have confined the footnotes to references necessary for my argument. The interested and also the informed reader will easily find an abundance of further literature.

Several colleagues have discussed the contents of this paper with me at the conference. Although I would like to thank them all for their remarks and observations, special thanks go to Marc Brett (Melbourne), Arie van der Kooij (Leiden) and Kirsten Nielsen (Århus) for their stimulating remarks. When preparing the final version of my paper, I was greatly helped with remarks and references by Willemien Otten (Utrecht) and Mathée Valeton (Zeist).

<sup>1</sup> L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog*, 29 volumes Amsterdam 1969-1991.

<sup>2</sup> E. F. Loftus, *Eyewitness Testimony*, Cambridge 1979; E. F. Loftus, G.R. Loftus, 'On the Permanence of Stored Information in the Human Brain', *American Psychologist* 5

recollections do not have the character of copies of reality. They are products of the mind. Memory is steered by the active involvement of the person who recollects its observations, with the events this person was involved in. In other words: The things older members of my family remember are not to be confused for a description of the reality, but it is to some degree how they wanted the reality to have been.

3. I do not agree, however, with his optimism that analysis of the sources will reveal “what really happened” in the period under consideration. Here Van Dis, as a novelist, represents an obsolete and naïve view on doing history.

I shall come back to the fundamental issues behind the second and the third point during my plea for a historical reading of the Old Testament.

## *2. Does reader-oriented reading exclude historical reading?*

In my opinion, the aim of Old Testament scholarship is the interpretation of texts: I want to know what kind of meaning can be applied to these ancient texts. I am aware of the fact that there is a – religious/theological – bias in stating that, for me, interpretation is the aim of my scholarly enterprise. This position does not include a hostile antagonism to colleagues who are searching for things like the history of ancient Israel; a grammar of Classical Hebrew or the supposed *Urtext*. These are indispensable tools *for* but not the aim *of* Old Testament scholarship.

When it comes to the process of interpretation, it should be noted that it belongs to the insights of current Old Testament scholarship that all interpretation is reader oriented.<sup>3</sup> To say the same differently: As for 1 Kgs. 21, it can be assumed that the text has been written by an author, eventually I would plea for a traditional ‘folktale’ edited by the final redactors of the Book of Kings when including the tale into their story. This author had some intention in writing the story on Naboth’s vineyard as had the redactors by making their edition or redaction. Do we know their intentions? When a scholar writes that it has been the intention of the author of the story of the vineyard to utter anti-Phoenician ideas, he or she is only saying that he thinks this is the intention. Formulated in more logical terms: he does not say ‘(p) is true’, but ‘I think (p) is true’ with the implication ‘I

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(1980), 409-20; E. F. Loftus, K. E. Ketcham, ‘The Malleability of Eyewitness Accounts’, in: S. M. A. Lloyd-Bostock, B. R. Clifford (eds.), *Evaluating Witness Evidence: Recent Psychological Research and New Perspectives*, Chichester 1983, 159-71.

<sup>3</sup> On reader response criticism see, e.g., U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington 1979; E. V. McKnight, *Post-Modern Use of the Bible: The Emergence of Reader-Oriented Criticism*, Nashville 1988; J. Barton, *Reading the Old Testament: Method in Biblical Study*, second edition, London 1996, 198-219.

hope you too would think that (p) is true.’ What he says about the intention of the author is hypothetical, biased by his scholarly agenda, it cannot definitively be controlled and has perlocutionary force.<sup>4</sup>

Does this imply that a historical-critical approach has become an obsolete enterprise? My answer to this question is negative, but complicated.<sup>5</sup>

1. The Old Testament was written in a society and a culture different from mine. This ‘fact’ shall not be passed by too easily. The language of the Old Testament, *i.e.*, its metaphors and their tenors, differ from mine.<sup>6</sup> This difference should be clarified before any interpretation is possible. Reading 1 Kgs. 21, I come across several features that ask for clarification: Naboth denotes his vineyard as his ‘ancestral heritage’. I need to know what social structures are behind that denotation before I can make an appropriate interpretation. Ahab is called ‘king’ in 1 Kgs. 21. Most readers, if not all, will agree with the statement that kingship in Ancient Israel differed from modern constitutional monarchy. The question, however, would be: to what degree does it differ? 1 Kgs. 21 refers to legal customs. Whether Jezebel is abusing local customs or that she is imposing foreign procedures can only be answered by research into the history of legal practices in Israel.<sup>7</sup>
2. Texts like 1 Kgs. 21 should be interpreted within their societal context. My argument for this statement would run as follows: Several features in the story of Naboth’s vineyard are connected with or refer to the symbol system of a remote society. I would eventually say that movements in the story are related to shifts in the belief system<sup>8</sup> of Ancient Israel. We cannot, however, operate with our *symbol system* in interpreting this text, as we cannot operate with romantic ideas about this ancient society

<sup>4</sup> See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Oxford 1962; V. Brümmer, *Theology and Philosophical Inquiry: An Introduction*, London-Basingstoke 1981, esp. 9-33.

<sup>5</sup> For an analogy with the interpretation of works of (contemporary) art, see A. Barnes, *On Interpretation: A Critical Analysis*, Oxford 1988, who argues that authorial intention has a place in interpretive criticism, although that place is limited.

<sup>6</sup> The distinction between *tenor* and *vehicle* in the analysis of metaphors was, as far as I can see, first introduced by I. A. Richards, *The Philosophy of Rhetoric*, Oxford-New York 1936, 96. There exists an abundance of literature on metaphors and metaphorical theology, see, e.g., G. Lakoff, M. Johnson, *Metaphors we live by*, Chicago 1980; J. M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language*, Oxford 1985; M. C. A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds: Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (UBL 9), Münster 1990, 1-87.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., F. I. Andersen, ‘The Socio-Juridical Background of the Naboth-Incident’, *JBL* 85 (1966), 46-57; S. Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israels im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (FRLANT 124), Göttingen 1982, 121-26; H. Niehr, *Rechtsprechung in Israel: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Gerichtsorganisation im Alten Testament* (SBS 130), Stuttgart 1987, esp. 64, 80, 84-87.

<sup>8</sup> On the concept ‘belief system’ see, e.g., M. B. Black, ‘Belief Systems’, in: J. J. Honigmann (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago 1973, 509-77.

presented to us in childhood. It would be an interesting piece of research to study the following question: How far do images about the society in Ancient Israel presented to us in the Jeshiwe, Sunday school or comparable institutions still determine our ideas? What we need for a careful interpretation is local knowledge about the ancient society in Israel and its symbol systems.<sup>9</sup> That goal that can only be achieved by historical research.

3. Parallel to this, attention should be paid to Barton's plea for 'literary competence' as the basis for interpreting texts.<sup>10</sup> With this idea, borrowed from structuralism, it is expressed that a reader needs the ability to recognize the *Form* of a given text before any meaning can be given to that text. Since we are socialized with the way people communicate by written means in our days, we can understand and distinguish present day texts. We do not take a political speech for a novel. We do not confuse an In Memoriam address for a tax-letter. This recognition is based on our awareness of signal words and conventional patterns. Since we thus share the social code of our society, even in its written expressions, we can appropriately give meaning to written texts.

When it comes to the interpretation of texts from the Hebrew Bible, we need to apprentice the ability to recognize the *form* of these ancient texts. Since they stem from a remote culture we have to look for ways to grasp the social code of that society. This can only be done by a historical approach, i.e., by comparing the *form* of a text from the Hebrew Bible with comparable texts from the same corpus as well as from the ancient Near East. A now classic example is the research done by John van Seters on 'biblical' historiography.<sup>11</sup> Comparisons of historical texts from the Hebrew Bible with ancient Near Eastern material have furnished us the conventions by which the writers of the Hebrew Bible composed their historical narratives.

### 3. *Is 'text minus ideology = history' true or naive?*

#### 3.1. Traditional historical criticism

Within the movements of liberalism and modernism, historical critical methods for reading biblical texts have emerged during, roughly speaking,

<sup>9</sup> On these ideas see C. Geertz, 'Religion as a Cultural System', in: M. Banton (ed.), *The Relevance of Models in Social Anthropology*, London 1965, 1-46; C. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, New York 1973, 87-125; C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, New York 1983, esp. 56-70.

<sup>10</sup> Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 8-19.

<sup>11</sup> See especially J. van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, New Haven-London 1983.



the nineteenth century. It is not my aim here to sketch the development of the historical critical method, as it is not my aim to dwell with orthodox and fundamentalistic reactions to it. Moreover, I will speak without much nuance about *the* historical critical approach, as if it were one coherent movement.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most important achievements of traditional historical-critical scholarship is the fact that this approach liberated the texts (and their interpretation) from the trammels of traditional and doctrinal religious convention. Nineteenth century historical-critical scholarship no longer treated the Hebrew Bible as the result of divine revelation, but as the deposit of the religious ideas of great men. Texts from the Hebrew Bible were no longer seen as ammunition for a doctrinal storehouse, but as expressions of an ethical belief from a remote society.

Before I turn over to some criticism of the traditional historical-critical approach, I would like to express clearly that without the work of the nineteenth century giants such as de Wette, Kuenen and Wellhausen, Old Testament scholarship would be completely different from what is now today. Without their scholarly initiatives Biblical Studies would no longer have been a part of academia.

### 3.2. Positivist pitfalls

Nevertheless, some criticism is needed and although I am not the first person to offer this criticism it is, I think, good to point again at some weaker elements in the historiographic ideas of de Wette, Kuenen and Wellhausen. The positivist pitfall of this approach can be formulated as follows: They wanted to reconstruct “what really happened” by reconstructing the original sources. This way of doing history is characteristic for the historiography of the nineteenth century. The task for the historian was then seen as a search for the sources. The famous *École des Chartes* in France is exemplaric for this approach.<sup>13</sup> A multitude of medieval manu-

<sup>12</sup> See, e.g., H.-J. Kraus, *Die Geschichte der historisch-kritischen Erforschung des Alten Testaments* (2. Auflage), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969; J. A. Loader, *Die Etiese Oud-Testamentici in Nederland tussen 1870 en 1914*, Pretoria 1984; J. W. Rogerson, *Old Testament Criticism in the Nineteenth Century: England and Germany*, London 1984; S. J. de Vries, *Bible and Theology in the Netherlands* (second edition), New York 1989; R. Smend, *Deutsche Alttestamentler in drie Jahrhunderten*, Göttingen 1989; H.-J. Bechtold, *Die jüdische Bibelkritik im 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1995.

<sup>13</sup> The ‘École des Chartes’ was founded on 22 February 1822 by the French civil servant Baron de Gérando. By this initiative the scholarly character of French historical studies was enhanced. See J. Voss, *Das Mittelalter im historischen Denken Frankreichs: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalterbegriffes und der Mittelalterbewertung von der zweiten Hälfte des 16. bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, München 1972, 338-46; H. Martin, ‘L’histoire érudite de Mabillon à Fustel de Coulanges’, in: G. Bourdè, H. Martin (eds.), *Les écoles historiques*, Paris 1983, 88-113.

scripts was edited in so-called *diplomatic* editions. This means that all kinds of chronicles were not edited in the form in which they were found let's say in the library of an ancient monastery. More than often religious expatiations or other ideological digressions were left out in the edition since they were assessed as later additions by implications. In other words: 'text minus ideology = history'. This approach is, somewhat, recognizable in the works of Kuenen and Wellhausen when reconstructing the history of Ancient Israel. A second feature in the traditional historical critical approach is the observation that Wellhausen *cum suis* construed the original source as a depiction of what really happened. In doing so they relied on the ancient idea of, for instance, Thucydides that the report of the eyewitness is the most trustworthy description of an event.<sup>14</sup>

It is interesting to note that in present Old Testament scholarship, despite a dispute on dating texts, two seemingly opposing groups are operating with the same historiographic model. The heirs of the Albright school<sup>15</sup> and the representatives of the 'minimalistic' school from Copenhagen and Sheffield<sup>16</sup> are both operating within the limits of a positivistic historiographic agenda. Both are reconstructing history based on reliable sources. The 'minor' detail, however, that their ideas of reliability differ, yields different reconstructions of Ancient Israel. Both, however, argue with the concept that 'text minus ideology = history'.

### 3.3. Literary criticism of 1 Kings 21

Is that statement true or naive? To what does it lead? These questions touch on the discussion on the validity of *literary-critical* analysis. The aim of this approach is to reconstruct a more original form of a given text by ascribing parts of that text to a later redactor or later redactors or by making clear that the given text is composite and should be construed as the blending of two or more different traditions on the same event.

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that Kuenen, more than Wellhausen, was aware of the subjective character of the descriptions of the past even when he uses the term 'true history' so often; see A. Kuenen, 'Critical Method', *The Modern Review* 1 (1880), 461-88, and the remarks by A. van der Kooij, 'The "Critical Method" of Abraham Kuenen and the Methods of Old Testament Research since 1891 up to 1991', in: P. B. Dirksen, A. van der Kooij (eds.), *Abraham Kuenen (1828-1891): His Major Contributions to the Study of the Old Testament* (OTS 29), Leiden 1993, 49-64. The methodical reservedness, expressed in Kuenen's paper, is, however, not always detectable in the statements of his major works.

<sup>15</sup> A good example is B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, San Francisco 1988.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., P. R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOT Sup 148), 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Sheffield 1995; N. P. Lemche, 'The Origin of the Israelite State – A Copenhagen Perspective on the Emergence of Critical Historical Studies of Ancient Israel in Recent Times', *JSOT* 12 (1998), 44-63.

Different ‘hands’ in a text are generally detected by analyzing the variation in language and style, in the depiction of the divine, in religious and ethical concepts, and by looking at the formal literary characteristics of a text such as doublets, interruptions, tensions and inconsistencies.<sup>17</sup> In line with the ideas of the Enlightenment, there has been a tendency in the literary-critical approach to regard ideological features as later additions since they are construed as religiously biased rewriting of the *true history*. Wellhausen’s view on the covenant would serve as an example. On the basis of the four-sources theory as a model for the emergence of the Pentateuch, he stipulates that the Hebrew term ברית does not refer to a historical event at Sinai but is to be seen as a theological idea forged in the period around the exile. ברית is an ideological term for the description of elements in Israel’s history and is not attested in earlier sources.<sup>18</sup>

In the tradition-historical approach of von Rad things changed slightly. Von Rad and others accept the idea that an older form of a tradition could contain ideology too. Although he does not see that as the primary aim of Old Testament scholarship, he, however, still believes that behind the oldest form of a tradition the *true history* can be detected.<sup>19</sup> It has been the *new literary criticism* that has challenged the literary-critical approach.<sup>20</sup> Concentration on the literary dynamics of the final form of a given text today often stands opposed to the idea that a text could be the product of a growth-process. In the future this antagonism should be discussed on a more fundamental level. In that discussion the following questions should be central: Are variations in a text, of whatever character, to be interpreted as dimensions of a text or should they be seen as clumsy additions?

As for the story of Naboth’s vineyard a few remarks on the question whether ‘text minus ideology = history’ is true or naive should be made. The story on Naboth’s vineyard is part of a greater text corpus: The cycle of stories on Elijah and Elisha incorporated in the Book of Kings. The Book of Kings is seen as a part of the deuteronomistic history-writing.<sup>21</sup> In

<sup>17</sup> See the various textbooks on the interpretation of the Old Testament; e.g., O. H. Steck, *Exegese des Alten Testaments: Leitfaden der Methodik* (12. überarbeitete und erweiterte Auflage), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1989.

<sup>18</sup> J. Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels I*, Berlin 1878; H. Gunkel, ‘Mose’, *RGG IV*, 516-524, even suggested that at Sinai a treaty between Moses and the Kenites or the Midianites was concluded; this treaty later was misunderstood for a covenant between YHWH and Israel.

<sup>19</sup> See his famous dictum: “Die historische Forschung sucht ein kritisch gesichertes Minimum; das kerygmatische Bild tendiert nach einem theologischen Maximum”, G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* (6. Auflage), München 1969, 120.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., E. V. McKnight, *The Bible and the Reader: An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics*, Philadelphia 1985; Barton, *Reading the Old Testament*, 104-97.

<sup>21</sup> Fundamental for the theory of the deuteronomistic history-writing is M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Tübingen 1943. Overviews on the discussion have been given by

the story of 1 Kgs. 21 a deuteronomistic layer can easily be identified. In Fig. 2 expressions have been collected that contain language characteristic for the ideology of the Deuteronomists.<sup>22</sup>

Next to this, one should note that in 1 Kgs. 21:19 the prophetic accusation and also the announcement of doom are specifically related to elements in the story 1 Kgs. 21:1-16, while the reproaches in, e.g., 1 Kgs. 21:20 are connected to the way Ahab executed his kingship in general. These observations yield the supposition that a more original story – 1 Kgs. 21:1-16.17-19.27-28.\*29 – has later been reedited by a deuteronomistic redaction.<sup>23</sup> The Deuteronomists reread and rephrased the story within the parameters of their well-known ideology.

To me this does not imply that this more original version relates the events as they have taken place and that it is free of ideology. Taking away every subjective or biased feature from the text – that is detracting the ideology from the story – distorts the narrative and leaves the reader with a meager set of unrelated pieces of evidence, such as names and legal customs that cannot be classified as history. What we have before us in the more original version of the story on Naboth's vineyard is still a narrative text that gives a selection and a reorganization of elements of the events that supposedly have taken place.

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H. Weippert, 'Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk. Sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung', *ThR* 50 (1985), 213-249; S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 1-19; J. R. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as a Project of Social Identity* (JSOT Sup 272), Sheffield 1998, 38-73.

<sup>22</sup> For a description of the deuteronomistic language and ideology, see M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972.

<sup>23</sup> My proposal differs only in detail from the assumption of G. Hentschel, *Die Elijaerzählungen: Zum Verhältnis von historischem Geschehen und geschichtlicher Erfahrung* (Erfurter Theologische Studien 33), Leipzig 1977, 14-43, who considers verses 20bβ-22, 24-6 to be a deuteronomistic redaction and construes vv. 23 and 27-29\* as later additions; see also J. A. Todd, 'The Pre-Deuteronomistic Elijah-Cycle', in: R. B. Coote (ed.), *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective* (SBL Semeia Studies 22), Atlanta 1992, 1-35. There is no room here to go into a detailed discussion on the question whether the redaction-history of 1 Kgs. 21 has even been more complicated. R. Bohlen, *Der Fall Nabot: Form, Hintergrund und Werdegang einer alttestamentliche Erzählung* (TThSt 35), Trier 1978, accepts a very complicated growth-process. In the Smend school, 1 Kgs. 21:20bβ-24 and 27-29 are generally allotted to DtrP, while 1 Kgs. 21:25-26 are seen as a later reflective addition by DtrN; see, e.g., W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972, 11-12, 21-22, 36-37; Timm, *Dynastie Omri*, 126-136. In the Cross-school no clear distribution of parts of 1 Kgs. 21 over Dtr1 and Dtr2 has been made, although McKenzie, *Trouble*, 67-69, allots 17-24 to DH and suggests that 18a.19b.23 are post-dtr additions. I do not agree with the assumption of A. Rofé, 'The vineyard of Naboth: The origin and message of the story', *VT* 38 (1988), esp. 97-101; and H. J. Stipp, 'Ahab's Buße und die Komposition des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes', *Bibl* 76 (1995), 471-97, that 1 Kgs. 21 is a later post-exilic retelling of an older story referred to in 2 Kgs. 9:26.

Expression	Translation	1 Kgs. 21	Parallels
התמכר לעשות הרע לפני יהוה	'to sell oneself to do evil in the sight of Yhwh'	1 Kgs. 21:20, 25	2 Kgs. 17:17
(הנני // הנה אנכי) מביא הרע על	'Lo, I shall bring harm upon ...'	1 Kgs. 21:21	1 Kgs. 14:10, 21:28; 2 Kgs. 21:12; 22:16; Jer. 11:11; 19:3.15; 35:17
בער // הבעיר אחרי	'to make a riddance of someone'	1 Kgs. 21:21	1 Kgs. 14:10; 16:3
etc. הכרתי	'to cut off ...'	1 Kgs. 21:21	1 Kgs. 14:10; 2 Kgs. 9:18; see 1 Sam. 25:22; Deut. 32:36
הלך אחרי הגללים	'to go after the idols'	1 Kgs. 21:25	Unique, but see the formulation with אלהים אחרים: Deut. 6:14; 8:9; 11:28; 13:3; 28:5; 29:16; Judg. 2:12.19; 1 Kgs. 11:10; 2 Kgs. 17:12.15; 21:11.21; 23:24; Jer. 2:5
הוריש X מפני	'to destroy X before ...'	1 Kgs. 21:26	1 Kgs. 14:24; 2 Kgs. 16:31; 17:8; 21:2

Fig. 2: Deuteronomistic language in 1 Kgs. 21

With this last remark that implies that texts do not equal events, I have consciously left the mode of positivistic history-writing and entered another field. But before I will make some remarks on historiography, I have to summarise in stating that the statement 'text minus ideology = history' is naive and does not solve the problem of subjectivity.

#### 4. *Rethinking historiography*

The last two decades or so ‘Biblical Historiography’ is on the move.<sup>24</sup> Here, I will only look for my personal point of view in the area full of methodological landmines between ‘sceptics’ and ‘realists’, between ‘minimalists’ and ‘maximalists’ aiming at a position that can help overcome the dead end street in which the discussion on historical questions has come. I have to start at a rather fundamental level.

Collingwood has developed a hermeneutic of history in which the idea of reenactment plays an important role.<sup>25</sup> This has to do with the inaccessibility of the past. Since time is irreversible, we cannot enter the past to obtain objective knowledge. To overcome this problem the historian has – based on the existing evidence – to reenact the past in his mind. Within the limits of the human mind a part of the past is reenacted, turned into a play so to say. Imagination plays, by implication, an important role, but it is not mere phantasy that yields the act. (A) Any reenactment is steered by the available evidence. (B) Reenactment is a way for the historian to experience the past, but it is never identical with the past. And the historian should be aware of the epistemological status of his picture and the propositions implied. This reenactment generally takes the form of a narrative. Most histories are stories written in the narrative form. The idea of ‘narrative’ is not totally identical with the idea of ‘fiction’. The identification, often made in Biblical scholarship, creates a pitfall and also a dead-end street. They are different categories. ‘Narrative’ is a meta-syntactical idea by which texts can be classified. It hints at the form, the *Gattung* of the text and the tenses used in it. ‘Fiction’ has to do with the question how far away from reality a text stands.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Important to the discussion are, among many others: M. Weippert, ‘Fragen des israelitischen Geschichtsbewusstseins’, *VT* 23 (1973), 415-42; J. M. Miller, *The Old Testament and the Historian*, Philadelphia 1976; Van Seters, *In Search of History*; N. P. Lemche, *Early Israel: Anthropological and Historical Studies on the Israelite Society Before the Monarchy* (VT Sup 37), Leiden 1985; Halpern, *The First Historians*; E. A. Knauf, ‘From History to Interpretation’, in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel’s Past* (JSOT Sup 127), Sheffield 1991, 26-64; Davies, *In Search of ‘Ancient Israel’*; I. W. Provan, ‘Ideologies, Literary and Critical: Reflections on Recent Writing of the History of Israel’, *JBL* 114 (1995), 585-606; H.M. Barstad, ‘History and the Hebrew Bible’, in: L.L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a ‘History of Israel’ be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 37-64.

<sup>25</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926-1928*, Oxford 1994, 282-302.

<sup>26</sup> See also the fundamental remarks on this subject by Knauf, ‘From History to Interpretation’, 47-50.

To bring this point to a more fundamental discussion, I will refer to the narrativism of, e.g., Danto and Ankersmit.<sup>27</sup> For them the *narratio* is a form of history-writing (or reenactment) that consciously selects and connects ‘events’ from the past into a narrative. The historian by profession is responsible for the selection of the material and the connection of data. When history-writing takes the form of a narrative, it is an organization of the past and not a mere description of it. A distinction should be made between the narrative as a whole and its elements. This distinction has to do with epistemology. The narrative as such cannot be verified, since it is the product of the mind of the historian. All that can be asked is internal consistency and evidence relatedness. A narrative relating history should not be self-contradictory. The reader should be given insight in how the elements of the narrative are related to archival data and comparable evidence.<sup>28</sup> The narrative, however, contains propositions, phrased as sentences, or groups of sentences that are evidence-related. They can be verified over and against the evidence available.<sup>29</sup>

All these remarks lead me to the supposition that the story on Naboth’s vineyard, even in its reconstructed more original form, is not to be seen as a primary source, as a piece of evidence as such or as the report of an eyewitness, but as a *narration*. The composer of the story, or the group of persons responsible for it, is presenting its or their organization of the past. \*1 Kgs. 21 presents a biased image of a social conflict that might have taken place somewhere in the ninth century BCE. It cannot be excluded beforehand that some elements from this narrative do relate to factual events. It is, however, not advisable to sift them from the present or the reconstructed text of 1 Kgs. 21 since that procedure will by implication lead to circular reasoning when it comes to the question how the narrator organized his *narration*.

### 5. The world(s) outside the story

Texts do not equal the past. Since they contain a selection and an ordering of elements from the past, texts should be construed as interpretations of the past. The interpretation of the past is eventually based on the belief- or

<sup>27</sup> A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, Cambridge 1968; F. R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantical Analysis of the Historian’s Language*, Den Haag 1983; see also the remarks by Barstad, ‘History and the Hebrew Bible’, esp. 54-60.

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*, 75-76. Le Roy Ladurie’s books – e.g., *Montaillou: Village occitan de 1294 à 1324*, Paris 1975; *Le siècle des Platter 1499-1628: 1. Le mendiant et le professeur*, Paris 1996 – form a good example, since this historian gives the reader the possibility to check the elements of his historical stories against the evidence on which they are constructed.

<sup>29</sup> See Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic*, 29, 75, 104.

symbol system of the author(s) of a text. In other words: The (original) story on the vineyard of Naboth is not a historical source but a narrative interpretation of features from reality.

Post-post-modern historical criticism is a multidimensional approach. It is not aiming at an objective reconstruction of events in Ancient Israel. Its goal is, rather simple: To read texts in their supposed historical context to uncover the belief system of the author(s) used in composing this narrative composition. When it comes to the process of interpretation two features are equally important: On the one hand texts should be read to get an insight in the text-internal dynamics. On the other hand the historical setting of the text should be designed from evidence outside the text.

What do we know about the world(s) outside 1 Kgs. 21? We know very little, but we can reenact a picture on the events that supposedly took place. Evidence is scarce. Contemporary texts do not refer to the tragic incident.<sup>30</sup> Archeology has not supplied evidence directly related to features in the text of 1 Kgs. 21.<sup>31</sup> It was claimed that a seal in the Reuben and Edith Hecht Museum in Haifa would contain the name of king Ahab: לִאֲחָאָב מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, 'belonging to Ahab, the King of Israel', and thus would supply a nice context for the story. Closer analysis of the object, however, revealed that the object dates to the sixth or fifth century BCE and that its inscription certainly did not contain the name of king Ahab.<sup>32</sup> From the archaeological evidence, in combination with the general knowledge on the Ancient Near East, a picture emerges. But note that this is my view on the broader historical context! On the level of *longue durée* a shift in the social organization in Ancient Israel is observable during Iron Age II. This shift basically is economic. The organization of the production of goods (e.g., food; clothing; tools) gradually changed from 'domestic' or 'kinship-related' into a more tributary system. In other words a situation in which they 'raised what they ate and they ate what they raised' changed into a production of surplus to satisfy the needs of a dominant ruling class that

<sup>30</sup> Extra-biblical texts, the Mesha-inscription and the Black-obelisk of Shalmanasser III, give independent evidence for the existence of the dynasty of Omri, see Timm, *Dynastie Omri*, 157-200; W. Gugler, *Jehu und seine Revolution: Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen*, Kampen 1996, 31-106; but the historicity of a name does not imply the historicity of later traditions containing that name.

<sup>31</sup> On the excavations at Jezreel and their disputed interpretations see now D. Oredsson, 'Jezreel – Its Contribution to Iron Age Chronology', *SJOT* 12 (1998), 86-101 (with lit.).

<sup>32</sup> See C. Uehlinger, 'Ahabs königliches Siegel? Ein antiker Bronzering zwischen Historismus und Reliquienkult, *Memoria und Geschichte*', in: A. Kessler, Th. Ricklin, G. Wust (eds.), *Peregrina Curiositas: Eine Reise durch den orbis antiquus zu Ehren von Dirk van Damme* (NTOA 27), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1994, 77-116. The name אֲחָאָב occurs on a ninth-century BCE jar handle from Tell el-Hamme, see J. Renz, W. Röllig, *Handbuch der althebräischen Epigraphik* I/1, Darmstadt 1995, 47, and on Iron Age II seal, see G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, Cambridge 1991, 272, but it is not clear whether the Israelite king Ahab is referred to.



might have been subordinate to international power. A 'domestic' economy tends to be egalitarian, since that is an appropriate way to survive and to endure. Tributary societies are by implication not-egalitarian. A minority group is dominant over the society and wants to continue and extend its control. The shift from one form to the other has been provoked by the contact that Israel had with competitive (e.g., Phoenicia and Syria) and dominant (Assyria) powers during Iron Age II. I prefer to label this shift in socio-economic terms rather than see this as a depiction of a more administrative character, such as a change from 'segmentary society' to 'state', or from 'tribal organisation' to 'monarchy'. This is because a change in the organization of the production of goods is more fundamental than a shift in the accompanying administration. The latter can be seen as a consequence of the former.<sup>33</sup>

To both types *symbol systems* are related which do not match. I will come back to this point later.

#### 6. Movements in the story

To begin with, I will have a quick look at the textual organization in 1 Kgs. 21:1-16.17-19.27.28.\*29. This story contains two parts that are interrelated.<sup>34</sup>

1 Kgs. 21:1-16 can be seen as a coherent and well-composed narrative. It is a story about acquisition. The main narrative program can be labelled as follows: The king, who at the beginning of the story is not the owner of the vineyard adjacent to his palace, acquires this piece of land. Just when Naboth loses both his vineyard and his life. He could have saved his life by agreeing to the proposal of the king the exchange his vineyard for another piece of land or for money. But he did not agree and that provoked the anguish of the king and the anger of Jezebel, the queen. It is very important to note an embedded narrative program. King Ahab wants to change the function of the vineyard into a *gan yārāq* which implies that the piece of

<sup>33</sup> Pace, e.g., R. B. Coote, K. W. Whitlam, *The Emergence of Early Israel in Historical Perspective*, Sheffield 1987; Rofé, 'The vineyard of Naboth', 91; K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion in Babylonia, Syria and Israel: Continuity and Change in the Forms of religious Life* (SHCANE 7), Leiden 1996, 316-17; N. P. Lemche, 'From Patronage Society to Patronage Society', in: V. Fritz, P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (JSOT Sup 228), Sheffield 1996, 106-20; S. Bendor, *The Social Structure of Ancient Israel: The Institution of the Family (beit 'ab) from the Settlement to the End of the Monarchy* (Jerusalem Biblical Studies 7), Jerusalem 1996, 207-83.

<sup>34</sup> Pace scholars like E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 251, who construes 1 Kgs. 21:1-16 as a rounded narrative that existed on its own and needed no continuation.

land will lose its agricultural function for a luxury one.<sup>35</sup> The prize for the acquisition is high: The loss of a man's life and the shift in the economic function of the piece of land.<sup>36</sup>

The second part of the story, 1 Kgs. 21:17-19.27-29\*, shows that the prize for the acquisition has been too high. This part has, as can be easily seen, two elements: A prophetic announcement of doom (vss. 17-19) and royal repentance leading to a delay in the execution of the punishment (vss. 27-29). Elijah has to reproach the king for economic and social misconduct: The accusation in verse 19 runs: "Have you committed murder and moreover taken possession?" It is an interesting question to ask on what the king's repentance and humiliation are based? Is it mere self-defence? Is it solely an act to save your life? Or is there more at stake? I will come to this later.

The deuteronomistic editors of the Book of Kings have deliberately changed the point of the story. In the more original form of the story, Ahab's misconduct was of a social character. In editing the story and adding a few verses they changed the character of the conflict into a religious clash. The stress is now on sin and idolatry.

### 7. Clashing belief systems

I already suggested that to societies based on different types of economic production, different belief systems or symbol systems relate. I don't have time to elaborate on that here much. I will only make a few observations. In the more original version of the story on Naboth's vineyard glimpses of two symbol systems are observable.

On the one side there are some features that functions as symbols for a kinship-related traditional local market economy. Most characteristic is the denotation of the vineyard as a *נחלה* indicating that the piece of land belonged to the inherited acres of Naboth's family. Within the story it is only in direct speech uttered by Naboth that the *כרם* is depicted as a *נחלה*. The symbol expresses tradition and continuity and the belief in God as the eventual owner of the land.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the depiction *נחלה* might suggest

<sup>35</sup> B. Halpern, 'The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography', in: Fritz, Davies (eds.), *Origins of the Ancient Israelite States*, 50, interprets the *gan yārāq* in view of Mesopotamian evidence not merely as a 'vegetable garden' but as a luxury one. He, however, slightly overinterprets the evidence when he construes a 'royal park filled with exotic import'.

<sup>36</sup> For comparable literary analyses of 1 Kgs. 21, see J. T. Walsh, 'Methods and Meanings: Multiple Studies of 1 Kings 21', *JBL* 111 (1992), 193-211.

<sup>37</sup> See Bendor, *Social Structure of Ancient Israel*, 129-33; R. Kessler, 'Gott und König, Grundeigentum und Fruchtbarkeit', *ZAW* 108 (1996), 214-32. Note that in the recently published paleo-Hebrew inscription containing the 'petition of the widow' – see P. Bordreuil, F. Israel, D. Pardee, 'Deux ostraca paléo-hébreux de la collection Sh. Mous-

that the ancestors of Naboth were buried on this piece of land and that the veneration of the ancestors yielded prosperity.<sup>38</sup>

On the other hand, some features in the story refer to a tributary economy. To mention a few: (a) the concept of כֶּסֶף, 'silver; money', used as a medium of exchange; and (b) the shift of the vineyard into a garden.

As for the characters in the story, apparently Naboth and Elijah are presented as representatives of the traditional society while Jezebel obviously is in the other camp. With regard to the role of Elijah, it is interesting to refer to an observation made by Overholt. When traditional societies were socially and politically disorganised after the initial contact with Europeans, native shamans more than once reached important positions in the traditional community helping them "to maintain their distinct identity and worldview".<sup>39</sup> This might have been the case with Elijah too. But what about king Ahab and what about YHWH? At two instances in the story, king Ahab is presented as in a personal crisis. After the refusal of Naboth he is in great despair. When Elijah has uttered his prophecy of doom, the king is in agony for his life. These features can be, and have been, interpreted on a psychological level.<sup>40</sup> In doing so the king is seen as an ordinary human being who has problems with an appropriate reaction to failure and misfortune and who takes refuge in apathy and, at the end of the story, who is frightened for his life and who bargains with the divine being for the extension of his lifetime. This is to some degree an appropriate interpretation and it is a reading of the text that could be very helpful when preparing a sermon. But I would like to add an extra dimension to this interpretation by connecting Ahab's feelings and emotions to the discontinuity in societal structure mentioned above. In my view, the king is torn between two loyalties. As a ruler over the traditional Israelite society he must have been socialized with the traditional symbol system. As the husband of Jezebel and as a member of the dominant class in the emerging new society, he is driven to the new system. This clash forms the dynamics of his dilemma.

The belief in YHWH as beneficent God blessing his chosen people and their crops has been a basic element in the traditional Israelite symbol system. At the end of the Iron Age, YHWH seems to have been the deity of the dominant group in the ancient Israelite and Judaeen societies. I will not

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saëff, *Semitica* 46 (1996), 49-76 + Planches 7 et 8 – the fact that the piece of land the childless widow claims has been the נַחֲלָה of her or her husband's family.

<sup>38</sup> See on this R. Westbrook, *Property and the Family in Biblical Law* (JSOT Sup 113), Sheffield 1991, 24-35; K. van der Toorn, *Family Religion*, 199.

<sup>39</sup> T. W. Overholt, *Cultural Anthropology and the Old Testament* (Guides to Biblical Scholarship), Minneapolis 1996, 53.

<sup>40</sup> See the commentaries on Kings s.v. and T. Hoover Renteria, 'The Elijah/Elisha Stories: A Socio-cultural Analysis of Prophets and People in Ninth-Century B.C.E. Israel', in: R. B. Coote (ed.), *Elijah and Elisha in Socioliterary Perspective* (SBL Semeia Studies 22), Atlanta 1992, 91.

elaborate on the history of religion here. As for 1 Kgs. 21, it should be noted that the author of the more original form of the story on the vineyard of Naboth presents the Israelite God as taking sides with Naboth and Elijah but not rigidly. When the king repents, YHWH accepts the terms of Ahab's bargain that are at the bottom of his mourning rites by postponing the announced doom.

#### 8. *No more grapes from the vineyard?*

At the *IOSOT* meeting in Oslo, Kirsten Nielsen presented a plea for intertextuality as a basic method in the interpretation of Biblical texts, using 1 Kgs. 21 as a proof-text.<sup>41</sup> I put myself the question: Where do we agree and where do we disagree? As far as I can see, we share the view that textual signs as such do not have a meaning. The word 'vineyard' as such has no meaning unless the sign is connected with other signs. Intertextuality as a reading strategy makes clear that significance originates in comparisons. By comparing the vineyard from 1 Kgs. 21 with other vineyards from Biblical stories a network of relations is woven that steers the reader in the process of the interpretation of a single text. I agree with that. I would, however, ask for the rules of the game. Can I just compare every sign with every sign? Could it be possible that some sign has a different gravity and that, by implication, the comparison with one כרם is more important than the comparison with the other? I disagree with Nielsen at one important point. She would confine her comparison to linguistic signs. In view of my remarks on the societal and historical context of texts made above, I would opt for including non-linguistic signs in the significance provoking comparison. Intertextuality without any historical relief would lead to a flat text in which everything is contemporary with everything. By implication preaching based on this kind of interpretation is at risk of proclaiming a-historical propositions. A comparable remark should be made about forms of intertextuality where the social context of a given text is without relevance which would lead to a kind of preaching in which the social context of the community is irrelevant.<sup>42</sup> In my view these consequences of our methodical choices and preferences should be discussed too. In sum – and with gross simplification – the difference can be phrased as a difference between *unifiers* and *diversifiers*. It is the historical-critical approach in the study of the Old Testament that helps to see the variety of meaning and significance in this large corpus of texts.

<sup>41</sup> See K. Nielsen, 'Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible', in: A. Lemaire, M. Sæbo (eds.), *Congress Volume Oslo 1998* (VT Sup 80), Leiden 2000, 17-31.

<sup>42</sup> These remarks tally with the criticism by M. G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies*, Cambridge 1991, 156-67, of the theological presuppositions of the *canonical approach*.

The historical-critical approach has been a flowering and fruitful method in Biblical studies. Different trends in recent Old Testament scholarship, mainly having the character of New Literary Criticism<sup>43</sup>, have forced to the background the traditional historical-critical approach. Sometimes, one fears that no more grapes will be harvested from the 'obsolete vineyard of historical-criticism'. When the historical-critical approach in the study of Biblical texts succeeds in avoiding the positivistic pitfalls and accepts the limits of its enterprise, the method will be revitalized and remain fruitful for the field.

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<sup>43</sup> See the essays in J. C. Exum, D. J. A. Clines (eds.), *The New Literary Criticism and the Hebrew Bible* (JSOT Sup 143), Sheffield 1993.

## Chapter IV: Did Jehu Write the Tel Dan Inscription?\*

### 1. Introduction

On 21 July 1993 a basalt stone with an ancient Northwest Semitic inscription was unearthed during an archaeological campaign at Tel Dan, formerly Tell el-Qādi. About one year later two other inscribed fragments were found at the same site. Admirably, the inscriptions were quickly published by Biran and Naveh.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the publication of these inscriptions occasioned an intense and sometimes heated<sup>2</sup> discussion among scholars on questions such as the authenticity of the text(s), the date and language – Hebrew, Aramaic or a mixed dialect – of the inscription(s), the possibility of a join between the fragments known and the identity of the morpheme בֵּית־דָּוִד – ‘House of David’ or ‘Temple of the deity Dôd’ – in line 9 of the inscription.<sup>3</sup> I will not repeat or summarise the discussion here but only state that a consensus has not yet been reached. New material or new methods alone can cause a way out of the stalemate position between opposite views.

A main problem is the identity of the ‘I’-figure in the inscription. The anonymous person is often interpreted as an Aramaic king<sup>4</sup>, Benhadad/Bar Hadad<sup>5</sup>, Hadad-Ezer<sup>6</sup> or Hazael<sup>7</sup>, narrating a victory over Israel. According

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\* An updated version of my paper B. Becking, ‘Did Jehu Write the Tel Dan Inscription?’, *SJOT* 13 (1999), 187-201.

<sup>1</sup> A. Biran, J. Naveh, ‘An Aramaic Stele Fragment from Tel Dan’, *IEJ* 43 (1993), 81-98; A. Biran, J. Naveh, ‘The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment’, *IEJ* 45 (1995), 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> As especially reflected in the titles of the following papers: H. Shanks, ‘“David” found at Dan’, *BAR* 20/2 (1994), 26-39; P. R. Davies, ‘“House of David” Built on Sand: The Sins of the Biblical Maximizers’, *BAR* 20 (4, 1994), 54-55; A. F. Rainey, ‘The “House of David” and the House of the Deconstructionists’, *BAR* 20/6 (1994), 47, who warns the reader in his subtle subtitle that ‘Davies is an amateur who can “safely be ignore”’.

<sup>3</sup> An outline of the most important contributions to the debate is found on pp. 11-14 of A. Lemaire, ‘The Tel Dan Stela as a Piece of Royal Historiography’, *JSOT* 81 (1998), 3-14. See now G. Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation* (JSOT Sup 360), Sheffield 2003; L. J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (SBL Academia Biblica 12), Atlanta 2004, 110-32; H. Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Critical Investigation of Recent Research on Its Palaeography and Philology* (Studia Semitica Uppsalsensia 22), Uppsala 2006, 165-67, 171.

<sup>4</sup> S. Hafthorsson, *A Passing Power: An Examination of the Sources for the History of Aram-Damascus in the Second Half of the Ninth Century B.C.* (CB OTS 53), Stockholm 2006, 59-64, is undecided between Bar Hadad and Hazael.

<sup>5</sup> Proposed by Biran, Naveh in their edition of the first fragment (‘Aramaic Stele Fragment’, 86); adopted by, e.g., E. Puech, ‘La stèle araméenne de Dan: Bar Hadad II et la

to the text reconstructed by Biran and Naveh, Hazael had killed the kings Joram and Ahaziah. This, however, is contrary to the tradition attested at 2 Kgs. 9:16-29 where Jehu is seen as the one who executed the end of the house of Omri proclaimed by Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:17) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 9:6-10). Biran and Naveh suggest that – on the level of historical reconstruction – Hazael would have used Jehu as an agent.<sup>8</sup> In case their interpretation is correct, unexpected light would fall on an until now relatively dark period in the history of Israel.<sup>9</sup> This view, however, is tentative.

## 2. A new proposal: Jehu as the 'I'

Recently, Wesseliuss has elaborated a new proposal.<sup>10</sup> In his view the inscription does not reflect the victory of an Aramaic ruler, but of an Israelite king. He reconstructs the Tel Dan inscription as follows:

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coalition des Omrides et de la maison de David', *RB* 101 (1994), 233-241; E. A. Knauf, A. de Pury, Th. Römer, '\*BaytDawid' ou \*BaytDod? Une relecture de la nouvelle inscription de Tel Dan', *BN* 72 (1994), 68-69; J.-L. Ska, *Les énigmes du passé: Histoire d'Israël et récit biblique* (Le Livre et le Rouleau 14), Bruxelles 2001, 99-100; Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 255-68.

<sup>6</sup> M. Dijkstra, 'An Epigraphic and Historic Note on the Stela of Tel Dan', *BN* 74 (1994), 12-14, based on an unclear historical analysis of 1 Kgs. 20 and 22; E. Lipiński, 'The Victory Stele from Tell el-Qādi', in: id., *Studies in Aramaic Inscriptions and Onomastics* II (OLA 57), Leuven 1994, 83-86.

<sup>7</sup> Proposed by J. Tropper, 'Eine altaramäische Steleninschrift aus Dan', *UF* 25 (1993), 396-98; B. Margalit, 'The OAram. Stele from t.Dan', *NABU* (1994)/1, 20-21; B. Halpern, 'The Stela from Dan: Epigraphic and Historical Considerations', *BASOR* 296 (1994), 63-80; adopted by Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 18, after their joining of the three fragments; see also B. Margalit, 'The Old Aramaic Inscription of Hazael from Dan', *UF* 26 (1994), 317; S. Yamada, 'Aram-Israel Relations as Reflected in the Aramaic Inscription from Tel Dan', *UF* 27 (1995), 612; W. H. Schniedewind, 'Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu's Revolt', *BASOR* 302 (1996), 82-86; V. Sasson, 'Murderers, Usurpers, or what? Hazael, Jehu, and the Tel Dan Old Aramaic Inscription', *UF* 28 (1996), 547-554; W. Dietrich, 'dāwid, dōd und bytdwd', *ThZ* 53 (1997), 31-32; Lemaire, 'Tel Dan Stela'; N. Na'aman, 'The Contribution of Royal Inscriptions for a Re-Evaluation of the Book of Kings as a Historical Source', *JSOT* 82 (1999), 10-11; Hagelia, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 122-23.

<sup>8</sup> Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 17-18.

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOT Sup 146) Sheffield 1993, 595-601.

<sup>10</sup> J. W. Wesseliuss, 'De eerste koningsinscriptie uit het Oude Israël: Een nieuwe visie op de Tel Dan-inscriptie', *NedTT* 53 (1999), 177-90; J. W. Wesseliuss, 'The First Royal Inscription from Ancient Israel: The Tel Dan Inscription Reconsidered', *SJOT* 13 (1999), 163-88.

- |     |  |                  |
|-----|--|------------------|
| 1.  | [ 'nh.yh 'hwy]t[. ]sr. '[bdy.mlk'. ]wgzr[.dynh | ] <sup>11</sup>  |
| 2.  | [hz]h 'l. 'by.ysg[ph.bh]tlhmb.b 'b[y           | ] <sup>12</sup>  |
| 3.  | wyškb. 'by.yhk. 'l[.byt]h.wy 'l.mlky[s         | ] <sup>13</sup>  |
| 4.  | r 'l.qdm.b 'rq. 'by[.w]yhmlk.hdd[.] 'l[ty      | ] <sup>14</sup>  |
| 5.  | 'nh.wyhk.hdd.qdmy[.w] 'pq.m--b '[              | ] <sup>15</sup>  |
| 6.  | y.mlky.w 'qtl.ml[kn.š]rn. 'sry. 'lpy.r         | ] <sup>16</sup>  |
| 7.  | kb.w 'lpy.prš. [qtl. 'yt.yw]rm.br.[ 'h 'b.     | ] <sup>17</sup>  |
| 8.  | mlk.ysr 'l.wqtl[t. 'yt. 'hz]yhw.br[.yhwrm.ml   | ] <sup>18</sup>  |
| 9.  | k.bytdwd.w 'sm. [                              | ] <sup>19</sup>  |
| 10. | yt. 'rq.hm.l[                                  | ] <sup>20</sup>  |
| 11. | 'hrn.wlh-[                                     | m] <sup>21</sup> |
| 12. | lk. 'l.ys[r 'l                                 | ] <sup>22</sup>  |
| 13. | mšr. 'l[                                       | ] <sup>23</sup>  |

This leads to the following translation:<sup>16</sup>

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | [I, Jehu, was] a head over the se[rvants of the king and his] jud[ge ]              |
| 2. | [Haz]ael my father hi[t him when h]e battled against [my] fa[ther ]                 |
| 3. | and he laid down (ill). My father went (back) to his [house]. And the king of I[s-] |

<sup>11</sup> Note that Wesseliuss reads *sr* instead of *mr*; see also Tropper, 'Altaramäische Steleninschrift', 401; Schniedewind, 'Tel Dan Stela', 79. Further, he construes *gzr* as a participle and the expression *gzr dyn* as a hendiadys for 'the one who executes the verdict; the judge'.

<sup>12</sup> Although the reading *ys[q. 'lwh]*, 'he wen[t up against him]', proposed by the editors in their presentation of B1 + B2, Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 12-13, is - according to Wesseliuss - certainly possible, he prefers, in view of the parallel verb *škb*, 'to lay (ill)', in line 3, a form of the verb *sgp*, 'to hit; wound', that is also attested in Syriac.

<sup>13</sup> Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 193, 208-11, proposed to read: [... האל] (4) ראל קדם בארץ אלבי (האל) (3), "[... at every] ancient [h]earth on ground of El-Bay[thel ...]". Accepting this proposal would imply that the Tel Dan inscription would refer to a stone-deity Bethel; see also Hagelia, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 60-61. For a criticism of this view see B. Becking, 'Does the Stele from Tel Dan Refer to a Deity Bethel?', *BN* 118 (2003), 19-23. On the improbability of the reading *w]yhmlk.hdd* see below 4.3.7.

<sup>14</sup> Wesseliuss notes that Lemaire correctly criticized the reading *ml[kn. šb] 'n*, 'seventy kings', proposed by Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 12-13, 16. He, however, disagrees with the suggestion by Lemaire, 'Tel Dan Stela', 5, to read *ml[kn. tk]pn*, 'strong kings'. About this Wesseliuss points to 2 Kgs. 10:4: 'Behold, two kings could not stand up to him, how can we stand?'. The passage from Kings, however, reads *šēnē hammēlākīm*.

<sup>15</sup> With Schniedewind, 'Tel Dan Stela', 80; Lemaire, 'Tel Dan Stela', 10, Wesseliuss prefers the shorter reading *[yw]rm* above *[yhw]rm*.

<sup>16</sup> I present here Wesseliuss' translation rendered by me into English as carefully as possible. For the orthographic and grammatical decisions implied in his translation and not mentioned above see Wesseliuss' articles.



4. rael had formerly entered the land of my father. [And] Hadad made  
m[e] king,
5. (yes) me. Hadad went before me. [And] I left ... [ ... ]
6. of my kingdom. I killed[tw]o kin[gs] who had put tho[usands of  
cha-]
7. riots and thousands of horses. [I killed Jo]ram, the son of [Ahab, ]
8. the king of Israel. I kill[ed Ahaz]yahu, the son [of Joram, the k- ]
9. ing of the House of David. I appointed [ ]
10. their land into [ ]
11. an other one [ ] k]
12. ing over Is[rael ]
13. siege against [ ]

Using this text as a basis for his assumption, he makes a set of remarks on the plausibility of his thesis.

First, he argues that Jehu before his revolt might have had good connections with Hazael, king of Aram. In his interpretation Jehu calls Hazael ‘my father’ (line 2). Has there been a situation in ancient Israel, when Jehu acted in close cooperation with the Aramaic king Hazael, generally depicted by the Hebrew Bible as a great enemy of the Israelites?<sup>17</sup> Like Schniedewind<sup>18</sup>, Wesselius presupposes that Jehu around the period of his rebellion had assured himself of Aramaic backing for his deeds and doings.

Second, construing Jehu as the ‘I’-character of the Tel Dan inscription, Wesselius has a problem to solve. Line 4 reads: [w]yhm<sup>l</sup>k.hdd[.]’[y<sup>t</sup>y], ‘[And] Hadad made m[e] king.’ Line 5 contains an experience of divine guidance: wyhk.hdd.qdmy[.], ‘Hadad went before me’. These clauses are easy to understand with an Aramaic king as the main character of the text. The general picture of Jehu in the Hebrew Bible is that of a Yahwistic king. Based on 2 Kgs. 10:18, however, Wesselius supposes a period in the life of Jehu in which the Israelite king was venerating a deity other than YHWH. This text reads as follows: “Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much!”. This clause introduces a gathering of ministrants and priests of Baal with Jehu planning a great sacrifice for this deity. Wesselius accepts a lap of time between this gathering and the slaughter of the Baal-priests in 2 Kgs. 10:23-28. This period would coincide with the pro-Aramaic period in Jehu’s career.

Third, the language of the inscription is puzzling. With Jehu as the main character one would expect a Hebrew text and not an Aramaic one or a text written in a mixed dialect. Wesselius takes the inscription to be Aramaic and then points to the fact that, as a vassal of the Aramaic king, Jehu might

<sup>17</sup> See 2 Kgs. 8:12; 10:32-33.

<sup>18</sup> Schniedewind, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 85.

have preferred the language of those who helped him over his mother's tongue.

Wesselius' proposal is ingenious. It can be observed that he did not bring in new evidence or a new method. In fact he has been rearranging existing evidence applying about the same historical methods as other scholars have done before him by merging epigraphic and Biblical data. The question would be whether his rearrangement of the evidence is more convincing than the existing proposals.

### 3. *Evaluation of Wesselius' proposal*

The idea that Jehu was the author of the Tel Dan inscription is based on a set of propositions and assumptions that will be discussed in this section.<sup>19</sup>

#### 3.1. Tel Dan inscription or inscriptions

Wesselius' view is based on the assumption that the fragments Dan A and Dan B1 + B2 should be construed as part of originally one inscription. The acceptance of the joining of the fragments is decisive for the question whether the Israelite king Joram and the Judaeen king Ahaziah are referred to in the inscription. The join has been proposed by Biran and Naveh although they accept that the fragments A and B1+2 cannot be joined in an obvious unequivocal way.<sup>20</sup> Their view has been taken over by a majority of scholars.<sup>21</sup> Arguments against this join have been brought forward, however: The fragments were found at different spots in the excavation area. The scripts of the fragments A and B1 + B2 do not completely match. At places where the texts are proposed to join, there is not enough space for the proposed readings. The average interval between the lines in A and B1 + B2 is not the same.<sup>22</sup> These arguments have as far as I can see never been refuted or discarded. Nevertheless, some scholars still accept the view that

<sup>19</sup> Wesselius' view is now criticized by Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 257.

<sup>20</sup> Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment'.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., by Margalit, 'Old Aramaic Inscription', 317-20; Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 110-32; A. Lemaire, 'Hebrew and Westsemitic Inscriptions and Pre-Exilic Israel', in: J. Day (ed.), *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (JSOT Sup 204), London-New York 2004, 359-70.

<sup>22</sup> See F. H. Cryer, 'King Hadad', *SJOT* 9 (1995), 223-35; T. L. Thompson, 'Dissonance and Disconnections: Notes on the *bytdwd* and *hmlk.hdd* Fragments from Tel Dan', *SJOT* 9 (1995), 236-40; B. Becking, 'The second Danite Inscription: Some Remarks', *BN* 81 (1996), 21-30. This view has been taken over by, e.g., N. P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, London 1998, 38-43; T. L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, London 1999, 205.

all fragments can be joined into one single inscription.<sup>23</sup> Since the arguments against this join are still valid, hypotheses based on this assumption – like the one elaborated by Wesseliuss – should be considered with more than great caution.

After a very thorough investigation of the archaeological contexts of the finds and a painstaking epigraphical and palaeographical analysis of the inscription, George Athas arrived at the conclusion that the three fragments have been part of one large monumental inscription. Fragment A contains the remnants of the upper part of the inscription while fragments B1+2 should be placed below fragment A at about 20-25% from the bottom.<sup>24</sup> This well argued position is that convincing that I have to withdraw my earlier opinion that the fragments had been part of two separate inscriptions.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Athas' analysis undermines definitively the view that the fragments can be joined as has been proposed by Biran and Naveh. By implication, the proposal of Wesseliuss, being based on this assumption, is severely weakened by Athas' analysis.

### 3.2. The trouble with Kings

In his article Wesseliuss treats the present text of the Book of Kings as a primary historical source. He interprets elements from this text, for instance the remarks in 2 Kgs. 10:18ff., as supplying the reader first hand historical information. This is a naïve and biblicistic view that fails to appreciate present scholarship on the problems of the Deuteromistic History writing and undervalues the more theoretical questions related to reconstructing the past.<sup>26</sup> One does not have to go as far as Fleming

<sup>23</sup> E.g., Yamada, 'Aram-Israel Relations', esp. 611n. 1; Schniedewind, 'Tel Dan Stela', 77-78 (after computer-aided manipulation of the text); W. Gugler, *Jehu und seine Revolution: Voraussetzungen, Verlauf, Folgen*, Kampen 1996, 174 n. 651; Dietrich, 'dāwid, dōd und bytdwd', 29-32 - later Dietrich was more reluctant: The assumption of a join might be premature and if they were fragments of one inscription, they might have joined at another spot (W. Dietrich, *Die frühe Königszeit in Israel: 10. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (BibEnz 3), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1997, 140) -; Lemaire, 'Tel Dan Stela', 3 ('most probable, even if not practically certain'); Ska, *Énigmes du passé*, 99-100; Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 110-32; Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 49-64; K.A.D. Sme-lik, *Neem een boekrol en schrijf: Tekstvondsten uit het Oude Israël*, Zoetermeer 2006, 60-68. Sasson, 'Murderers, Usurpers, or what?', 553, is of the opinion that the fragments are the remains of one inscription, but that the join proposed by the original editors is not the only possibility.

<sup>24</sup> Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 189-91; the idea has previously been suggested by Biran, Naveh, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 11; Dietrich, *Frühe Königszeit*, 140.

<sup>25</sup> Becking, 'Second Danite Inscription'.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., the valuable remarks by E. A. Knauf, 'From History to Interpretation', in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOT Sup 127), Sheffield 1991, 26-64; H. M. Barstad, 'History and the Hebrew Bible', in: L. L.

Nielsen who considers the deuteronomistic history as written on the matrix of Herodotus *Historiae*<sup>27</sup> or to see the Hebrew Bible as a Hellenistic book<sup>28</sup>, but one has to consider the fact that according to the various redaction-historical theories the Book of Kings was composed shortly before, during or after the exilic period.<sup>29</sup> This implies that there is a gap of about 250 to 400 years between the supposed events in the reign of Jehu and the redaction of the report as we now have it. I do not stand opposed to a view that surmises that older material has been used by the Deuteronomists, but one should argue which elements are early and probably trustworthy and which are late fabrications. Since 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 is generally seen as part of the redaction or even as a later addition<sup>30</sup> it is not easy to isolate the alleged original material from the story. This implies that any historical reconstruction of events from Iron Age II – like the one elaborated by Wesselius – should be considered with more than great caution.

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Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 37-64.

<sup>27</sup> F. A. J. Nielsen, *The Tragedy in History: Herodotus and the deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 251), Sheffield 1997; J. W. Wesselius, *The Origin of the History of Israel: Herodotus' Histories as Blueprint for the First Books of the Bible* (JSOT Sup 345), Sheffield 2002.

<sup>28</sup> See next to numerous articles by B. J. Diebner in *Dielheimer Blätter zum Alten Testament*; Lemche, *Israelites in History and Tradition*; Thompson, *The Bible in History*.

<sup>29</sup> Informative recent publications are J. R. Linville, *Israel in the Book of Kings: The Past as a Project of Social Identity* (JSOT Sup 272), Sheffield 1998; R. D. Nelson, *The Historical Books*, Nashville 1998; H. N. Rösel, *Von Josua bis Jojachin: Untersuchungen zu den deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbüchern des Alten Testaments* (VT Sup 75) Leiden 1999; T. Römer, A. de Pury, 'Deuteronomistic Historiography (DH): History of Research and Debated Issues', in: A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOT Sup 306), Sheffield 2000, 24-141; R. F. Person, *The Deuteronomic School: History, Social Setting, and Literature*, Atlanta 2002; Th. C. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*, London-New York 2005; and the essays in M. Witte et al. (eds.), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur „Deuteronomismus“-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (BZAW 365), Berlin-New York 2006.

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g. E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 340-342; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), New York 1988, 118; S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 70-78; M. Mulzer, *Jehu schlägt Joram: Text-, literar- und strukturkritische Untersuchung zu 2 Kön 8,25–10,36* (ATSAT 37), St. Ottilien 1992, 261-273; S. Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa: Die Erzählung von der Jehu-Revolution und die Komposition der Elia-Elisa-Erzählungen* (BWANT 152), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 2001, 29-74.

### 3.3. 2 Kings 10:18: Did Jehu really worship the Baal?

Wesselius interprets 2 Kgs. 10:18 as a reference to a period in the life of Jehu in which he was venerating Baal. He assumes a considerable period of time between the event of vs. 18 and the massacre of the servants of Baal. In doing so he avoids any discussion on the historicity of features in the Book of Kings. But even arguing within the textual world of 2 Kgs. alone, he did not consider the fact that this view is inconsistent with the remarks in 2 Kgs. 9:6. There Jehu is presented as a king anointed in the name of YHWH.<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that most scholars suppose 2 Kgs. 9:1-6 and 10:18-28 to be part of the same redactional layer.<sup>32</sup> This implies that Wesselius' suggestion would lead to the acceptance of considerable tension within that layer. In addition, he fails to see the irony in the story of 2 Kgs. 10:18-29.<sup>33</sup> His assumption of a considerable period of time between the events is an argument *e silentio*. It cannot be proved that Wesselius is incorrect on this point. He, however, did not consider the views of those scholars who dealing with this textual unit assume that, except for some later additions, the story in 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 should be seen as a comprehensive narrative.<sup>34</sup> In sum, it would be unlikely to assume that Jehu had served Baal in some period of his life.

### 3.4. The language of the inscription

Wesselius' argument that Jehu might have preferred the Aramaic language of those who helped him is as such plausible. The example that he brings to the fore regards the inscriptions from Sam'al/Ya'udî. Two inscriptions are in Phoenician<sup>35</sup>, two are written in a mixed dialect sometimes depicted as

<sup>31</sup> See below.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981; Würthwein, *Könige*, 324-329, 340-342; A. F. Campbell, *Of Prophets and Kings: A Ninth Century Document (1 Samuel 1 – 2 Kings 10)* (CBQMS 17), Washington 1986; Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*, 29-75. McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 70-78, considers 2 Kgs. 9:1-6 as part of the Dtr-redaction, while 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 is in his view a post-Dtr addition.

<sup>33</sup> See F. O. García-Treto, 'The Fall of a House: A Carnavalesque Reading of 2 Kings 9 and 10', *JSOT* 46 (1990), 59-60; Gugler, *Jehu*, 188-194. Sasson, 'Murderers, Usurpers, or what?', 552, even speaks about a 'dirty trick'.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., Würthwein, *Könige*, 340-342; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 118; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 78; Mulzer, *Jehu schlägt Joram*, 261-273. See also Thompson, *Bible in History*, 367; see now Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*, 73.

<sup>35</sup> The Kilamuwa inscriptions (*KAI* 24; 25) dating from around 825 BCE.

‘Ya’udic’<sup>36</sup> and six, some fragmentary though, are in Old Aramaic.<sup>37</sup> It is not clear, however, whether this shift in language is due to local linguistic developments or had political dimensions. The Bar-Rakib inscriptions being written in standard Aramaic, the second official language in the Assyrian Empire<sup>38</sup>, might indicate a mentality comparable to the one assumed with Jehu.

### 3.5. Aramaic aid for Jehu’s revolt?

Because of mere assumptions Wesseliuss argues that Jehu had been helped by Hazael in his rebellious act against Joram and Ahaziah. This assumption is difficult to assess. Schniedewind argues from 1 Kgs. 19:15-18, where Elijah is summoned by YHWH to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha, that there has been an alliance between Hazael and Jehu.<sup>39</sup> He, however, fails to argue how this divine speech is related to a historical event. Against this view, it should be noted that according to 2 Kgs. 10:32-33 Aramaic aggression against Israel continued during the reign of Jehu, which makes an earlier coalition between Jehu and Hazael less probable.<sup>40</sup> According to Assyrian inscriptions, Jehu paid tribute (*madattu*) to Shalmaneser III, an act that might suggest that his rebellion had Assyrian backing.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.6. ‘I killed Joram and Ahaziah’

Wesseliuss’ interpretation of line 7-8, “[I (= Jehu) killed Jo]ram, the son of [Ahab,] the king of Israel. I kill[ed Ahaz]yahu, the son [of Joram, the k]ing of the House of David” tallies with elements in the narrative in 2 Kgs. 9. Wesseliuss presumes that the Biblical account might have been based on a rewriting of the Tel Dan inscription after Jehu had turned away from the

<sup>36</sup> The inscription of Pannamuwa I (*KAI* 214), middle of the eighth century BCE and the inscription of Pannamuwa II (*KAI* 215), second half of the eighth century BCE. On these texts see now J. Tropper, *Die Inschriften von Zincirli* (ALASP 6), Münster 1993.

<sup>37</sup> The inscriptions of the Assyrian vassal Bar-Rakib (*KAI* 216-221) dating from the last quarter of the eighth century BCE.

<sup>38</sup> See, e.g., M. W. Hamilton, ‘The Past as Destiny: Historical Visions in Sam’al and Judah under Assyrian Hegemony’, *HTR* 91 (1998), 215-50.

<sup>39</sup> Schniedewind, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 83-84; see also Lemaire, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 6-7.

<sup>40</sup> See also J. K. Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria Palestine* (JDDS 1), Hong Kong 1995, 56-57; Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 49-64.

<sup>41</sup> III R 5,6 = E. Michel, ‘Die Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’ (858-824), *WdO* 1 (1947-52), 265-71:25-26; Marble Slab Inscription = E. Michel, ‘Die Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’ (858-824), *WdO* 2 (1954-59), 38-39 = A.O.104.8 = Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 256:10-11; see G. G. G. Reinhold, *Die Beziehungen Altisraels zu den aramäischen Staaten in der israelitisch-judäischen Königszeit* (EH 23, 368), Frankfurt am Main 1989, 174-179; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 51-62; Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 119; Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 95-96.

vation of Hadad. This supposed rewriting might have had the form of a first person singular report. The narrative in 2 Kgs. 9 is in a 3.m.s. form. The comparable elements are as follows: “But Jehu drew his bow and hit Joram between the shoulders – the arrow went through his heart – and he collapsed in his chariot” (vs. 24); “Jehu pursued him (= Ahaziah) and said: ‘Him, too ! Shoot him!’ . <They shot him><sup>42</sup> in his chariot at the ascent of Gur near Ibleam. He fled to Megiddo and died there” (vs. 27).

When the Tel Dan inscription in a rewritten form has been the source for this report in 2 Kgs., then some striking dissimilarities are visible.

1. In 2 Kgs. Ahaziah is never called ‘king of the House of David’, but always ‘king of Judah’.<sup>43</sup>
2. 2 Kgs. 9 gives the detail that Joram was killed by an arrow going through his heart and that his corpse was thrown on the plot of land formerly belonging to Naboth in Jezreel. Details like this are lacking in the Tel Dan inscription.
3. In the Tel Dan inscription – according to the interpretation of Wesselius – Jehu killed Ahaziah. In 2 Kgs. 9:27 Ahaziah died through the hands of Jehu’s servants.

It must be said that the proposal made by Wesselius brings the histories implied in the Tel Dan inscription and in 2 Kgs. 9 more in line with each other. The proposal by Biran and Naveh to see Hazael as the ‘I’ of the inscription mentioned above has as its weaker point that when reconstructing history and reconciling the Tel Dan inscription with the report in 2 Kgs. 9, they have to assume that the Aramaic king used Jehu in killing Joram and Ahaziah.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, they have to accept that the author of 2 Kgs. 9 credited Jehu as the executor. In this connection it should be noted

<sup>42</sup> Add with LXX *wykhw*; see, e.g., BHS; Würthwein, *Könige*, 326; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 103, 111; Otto, *Jehu, Elia und Elisa*, 34. I do not agree with the view of Gugler, *Jehu*, 175-177, who merging the report in 2 Kgs. 9:27-29 with features from 2 Chron. 22:8f. supposes that Jehu finally killed Ahaziah when in Megiddo.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g., 2 Kgs. 9:16.27.

<sup>44</sup> Biran, Naveh, ‘Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment’, 17-18. The problem can also be solved by accepting the report in the Tel Dan inscription as contemporaneous evidence and taking 2 Kgs. 9 as a late, highly literary, prophetic story on the rebellion of Jehu; see, e.g., Na’aman, ‘Contribution’, 11. Very ingenious, but difficult to assess, is the proposal by Yamada, ‘Aram-Israel Relations’, 618-22, who supposes that Hazael had killed, or at least fatally wounded, Joram and Ahaziah in the battle at Ramoth-Gilead referred to in 1 Kgs. 22:1-37. The story in 2 Kgs. 9 would then be a later fabrication to glorify the role of Jehu. On the possibility that 1 Kgs. 22 should be related to the reign of Jehu see J. M. Miller, ‘The Elisha Cycle and the Account of the Omride Wars’, *JBL* 85 (1966), 445; W. T. Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, Winona Lake 1987, 120-123; a view criticized by Reinhold, *Beziehungen Altisraels*, 367-368; Gugler, *Jehu*, 67-80; but see the balanced observations and remarks in Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 173-78. A rather biblicalistic view is found in Gugler, *Jehu*, 174 n. 651, who in view of the fragmentary character of the epigraphic findings prefers 2 Kgs. 9 as a better source.

that it belongs to the *genre* of Royal Inscriptions that kings can claim exploits executed by their subsidiaries as if they were their own deeds and doings. Halpern and Schniedewind have paid attention to an interesting case from the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III.<sup>45</sup> In the Monolith Inscription it is the local nobles who killed Giammu, the king of the Balih region.<sup>46</sup> The Black Obelisk Inscription suggests that it was the cities on the Balih that killed Giammu.<sup>47</sup> In the Marble Slab Inscription, written some 15 years later, it is Shalmaneser III who killed Giammu.<sup>48</sup> This example inspired Lemaire to assume that while 2 Kgs. 9–10 is probably close to the event, the Tel Dan Stela might have been written 20 or 30 years afterwards.<sup>49</sup>

Accepting the Tel Dan inscription in a rewritten form as source for the report in 2 Kgs. 9 implies that various elements in the report on Jehu in 2 Kgs. must be later fabrications. I am not certain whether Wesselius is willing to accept this implication. In sum, both views, Hazael or Jehu as the ‘I’ of the Tel Dan inscription cause trouble on the level of historical reconstruction.

### 3.7. ‘Hadad made me King’

Tel Dan inscription lines 4-5 read: *w[yhmlk.hdd[.]’[tyt. ]’nh*, generally rendered with: ‘Hadad made [me] king, yes me!’ The clause can be interpreted as a legitimation formula for a king who did not receive the throne by heritage<sup>50</sup> as would be fitting for Hazael<sup>51</sup> but also for Jehu. Taking ‘me’ as referring to Jehu this clause does not concur with the evidence of 2 Kgs. 9:6 where Jehu is presented as anointed on behalf of

<sup>45</sup> B. Halpern, ‘The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography’, in: V. Fritz, P. R. Davies (eds.), *The Origins of the Ancient Israelite States* (JSOT Sup 228), Sheffield 1996, 47 n. 10; Schniedewind, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 84.

<sup>46</sup> E. Schrader, *Keilinschriftliche Bibliothek* Band 1, Berlin 1889, 172-174:79-80; see *ARAB* I, § 610; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> Michel, ‘Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’, *WdO* 2 (1954-59), 149:54-55.

<sup>48</sup> Michel, ‘Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’, *WdO* 2 (1954-59), 32:13-14.

<sup>49</sup> Lemaire, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 10; Lemaire, ‘Hebrew and Westsemitic Inscriptions’, 369-70.

<sup>50</sup> See Biran, Naveh, ‘Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment’, 15; Lemaire, ‘Tel Dan Stela’, 6, and, e.g., 1 Kgs. 12:1.20 and 2 Kgs. 17:21; *pace* Margalit, ‘Old Aramaic Inscription’, 319 n. 10.

<sup>51</sup> See the Neo-Assyrian inscription of Shalmaneser III, *KAH* 30: Obv. 26-27, who presents Hazael as the ‘son of a nobody who seized the throne’; with Pitard, *Ancient Damascus*, 132-138; Gugler, *Jehu*, 90-92; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 53-54; Sasson, ‘Murderers, Usurpers, or what?’, 550-551. Note that in other inscriptions of Shalmaneser III Hazael is just depicted as <sup>p</sup>*ha-za-’i-DINGIR šá* <sup>kur</sup>*ANŠE šū*, ‘Hazael of the land of Imerishu (= Aram Damascus)’, III R 5,6 = Michel, ‘Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’, *WdO* 1 (1947-52), 265-276:2; Black Obelisk Inscription = Michel, ‘Assur-Texte Salmanassars III.’, *WdO* 2 (1954-59), 154 = A.O.102.8 = Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 255:97-98 [or: 2”-3”]; see Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 51-61, 62-66; Gugler, *Jehu*, 276; Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 118.



YHWH by the hands of a servant of Elisha. There are other problems with this view. The addition '[y]ty', supplying the object 'me' is far from certain. Within the parameters of the joined text the addition '[by]' resulting in the translation 'Hadad made [my] fa[ther] king', would yield an intelligent reading. Wesselius tries to solve this problem by construing the alleged, but enigmatic pronoun 'nh in the beginning of line 5 as part of the clause.<sup>52</sup> This is not very convincing.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, it should be noted that Cryer has observed that on the picture of fragment B1 no traces of a sign for the *yod* in *yhmlk.hdd* are visible. Therefore, he reads *hmlk.hdd* interpreting *hmlk* as a determined noun and seeing in Hadad an earthly king: 'king Hadad'.<sup>54</sup> He argues that in view of the article *hmlk* should be construed as a Canaanite or Hebrew form. This interpretation is not strictly necessary. Schniedewind has observed that there is no reason to expect a Canaanite definite article.<sup>55</sup> In my view *hmlk* should be construed as a Hiph./Haph. 'perfect' 3.m.s. of the verb *mlk*: 'he made king'. For syntactical reasons it is plausible to suggest that the subject of this clause preceded the verb and that *hdd* is the object: 'X made Hadad king'.<sup>56</sup> Since the word-divider after *hdd* is not certain, Hadad could also be the theophoric element of a personal name belonging to the person who was made king. These remarks make the assumption that Jehu is seen as investigated by Hadad not very plausible.

### 3.8. Can Baal be equated with Hadad?

Wesselius' proposal surmises the equation of Baal with Hadad, since he argues that the investiture on behalf of Hadad and the divine guidance by this deity both reflected in the Tel Dan inscription concurs with a period in the life of Jehu in which he was venerating Baal. At first sight this equation seems incorrect since Hadad is a West Semitic stormgod of Amorite and Aramaic descentance<sup>57</sup> while Baal refers to a Canaanite deity.<sup>58</sup> In 2 Kgs.

<sup>52</sup> As suggested by Biran, Naveh, 'Tel Dan Inscription: A new Fragment', 15; Lemaire, 'Tel Dan Stela', 6; Smelik, *Neem een boekrol*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Note that Margalit, 'Old Aramaic Inscription', 320, proposes to construe 'nh as an adverbial adjunct meaning 'timely; opportune'. Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 212, argues for the pronominal construction.

<sup>54</sup> Cryer, 'King Hadad', 232-233. Dietrich, *Frühe Königszeit*, 139, took over this translation without revealing his reading of the epigraphic evidence.

<sup>55</sup> Schniedewind, 'Tel Dan Stela', 79.

<sup>56</sup> See also Becking, 'Second Danite Inscription', 26. Note that Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 224-35; Hafthorsson, *Passing Power*, 57, are of a slightly different opinion.

<sup>57</sup> See, e.g., H. Niehr, *Religionen in Israels Umwelt* (NEB Ergänzungsband zum AT 5), Würzburg 1998, esp. 154-168; J. C. Greenfield, 'Hadad', in: *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 377-382.

<sup>58</sup> See O. Loretz, *Ugarit und die Bibel: Kanaanäische Götter und Religionen im Alten Testament*, Darmstadt 1990, 73-78, 156-159; Niehr, *Religionen in Israels Umwelt*, esp. 35-39, 43-47; W. Herrmann, 'Baal', in: *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 132-139.

10 Baal is related with Phoenician cults<sup>59</sup>, while Hadad is presented as part of the Aramaic world.

It should be noted, however, that the Book of Kings speaks about deities other than YHWH in a very unspecific way.<sup>60</sup> This implies that the Baal mentioned in 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 does not necessarily equate with the Baal known from Canaanite sources. Moreover, it should be noted that already in the texts from Mari, Hadad is sometimes referred to by his title *ba'lu*. In Ugaritic texts Baal and Hadad often stand in parallelism, for instance in the opening scene of the Baal cycle.<sup>61</sup> In texts from Emar the divine name <sup>d</sup>IM can refer to Baal as well as to Hadad.<sup>62</sup> This short religio-historical détour makes clear that Baal in 2 Kgs. 10:18-28 might be interpreted as a title for Hadad.

### 3.9 Conclusion: A disbalance of (im)probabilities

The idea that Jehu was the author of the Tel Dan inscription is based on a set of implications. Some of them are not improbable. The majority, however, are very unlikely or based on inconvincing interpretations of the available evidence. Drawing up the balance I am inclined to say that the proposal, though basically not impossible, is far from probable.

### 4. Did Jehu write the Tel Dan inscription?

The foregoing implies that I am not convinced by the arguments of Wesselius. As for the interpretation of the inscribed fragments from Tel Dan, I am still of the opinion that we have to treat them as two different narratives or episodes: Dan 1 (= fragment A) and Dan 2 (= B1 + B2). Dan 1 should be construed as the remains of a report on a military conflict in the eighth century BCE written on behalf of the victorious Aramaic king. This conflict is difficult to date. Dan 2 most probably reports on a military conflict too as is suggested by the wordgroup *tlḥmh.b*, 'to battle against', in line 2' of this fragment. In view of the scarcity of evidence it is impossible to relate the struggle referred to in Dan 2 with the conflict described in Dan 1 or to relate it with any event from the troublesome relation between Aram and Israel in Iron Age IIA.

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<sup>59</sup> See, e.g., Gugler, *Jehu*, 188-194.

<sup>60</sup> See most recently Rösel, *Von Josua bis Jojachin*, 19-22.

<sup>61</sup> *KTU* 1.101:1-4; see J. C. de Moor, *An Anthology of Religious Texts from Ugarit* (Nisaba, 16), Leiden 1987, 1-2; for criticism of this view see M. S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle I* (VT Sup 50), Leiden 1994, 3-4.

<sup>62</sup> See Greenfield, 'Hadad', 378-79.

The analysis of the inscription by George Athas, however, has made clear that the three fragments (A; B1+B2) should be regarded as pieces of one and the same inscription. Fragment A contains the remnants of the upper part of the inscription while fragments B1+2 should be placed below fragment A at about 20-25% from the bottom.<sup>63</sup> Athas' view also has implications for the historical context of the inscription. In view of the archaeological findings at Tel Dan the inscription should be construed as referring to events that took place in the early part of the eighth century BCE. Athas makes a strong case that the 'king of ביתרוד' mentioned in A:8-9 was Joash and that his son Amaziah is referred to in B:8.<sup>64</sup> His analysis not only reinforces my idea that two different military conflicts were related in the Tel Dan inscription, but also that the events narrated took place several decades after the death of Jehu, who – by implication – cannot be the author of this inscription.

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<sup>63</sup> Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 189-91; the idea has previously been suggested by Biran, Naveh, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', 11; Dietrich, *Frühe Königszeit*, 140.

<sup>64</sup> Athas, *Tel Dan Inscription*, 255-98.

Chapter V:  
‘Touch for Health ...’  
Magic in 2 Kings 4:31-37 with a Remark  
about the History of Yahwism<sup>\*</sup>

*1. Structural analysis of 2 Kings 4:8-37*

The main character of stories is that they are an expression of change. The analysis of a story needs to start with a comparison of the situation expressed or implied at the beginning of the narrative with the situation reached at the end of the story. The author of 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 also is speaking of a change. This change takes place with the woman from Shunem. At the beginning of the story we are informed about her, She is said to be a ‘great woman’, an *’iššā g<sup>e</sup>dôlā*. The adjective ‘great’ here does not have a literal meaning, but – as fits the context – it means something like ‘distinguished; of high rank’.<sup>1</sup> Further, it is said that she is so benevolent towards Elisha that she is willing to build a small upstairs room for him. Next, we are told that no son has been born to this woman. This piece of information reaches the reader by way of Gehazi. He says to Elisha in verse 14: “She has no son and her husband is old”.

At the end of the story the first characteristic is apparently unchanged. She can still be regarded as a rich woman. The relationship between the woman and the prophet is restored after a crisis. The greatest change is that she now possesses a healthy son. Put briefly: the main narrative programme of 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 is the abolition of the lack of a son.

To tell this story the author makes use of several episodes. These episodes are to be distinguished by changes within the text, changes that appear in the characters presented and changes in the elements of time and

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<sup>\*</sup> Originally published as B. Becking, “‘Touch for Health’”. Magic in 2 Kgs. 4:31-37 with a Remark on the History of Yahwism’, *ZAW* 108 (1996), 34-54.

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<sup>1</sup> See also Jona 3:7; Nah. 3:10, and: L. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha as Polemics against Baal Worship* (POS 6), Leiden 1968, 97; *HALAT*, 170; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), New York 1988, 56.

space in which the story is presented. On the basis of these changes I offer the following analysis:<sup>2</sup>

I	8-10	Shunem	woman man	building of the upstairs room
II	11-17	upstairs	Elisha Gehazi woman	annunciation and birth of the son
III	18-24	field > home > upstairs	son man woman	disease and dying of the son
IV	25-30	Carmel	woman Gehazi Elisha	bitter reproach of the woman to Elisha
V	31-37	upstairs	Gehazi Elisha son woman	raising of the son

It must be noted that episode I is embedded, as a kind of a ‘flash-back’, into episode II. Verses 8b-10 give background information to the story told in 8a.11ff.

This short and somewhat superficial analysis could lead to the conclusion that 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 tells about the abolition of a lack by using five episodes. However, two remarks must be made.

1. The woman does not experience the fact that she has no son as a lack. This becomes clear from episode II. Elisha wishes to do something for the woman as a reward for the building of the upstairs room. After consulting Gehazi, Elisha promises the woman from Shunem that she

<sup>2</sup> For other and comparable proposals concerning the structure of 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 see, among others, B. O. Long, ‘A Figure at the Gate: Readers, Reading and Biblical Theologians’, in: G. M. Tucker, D. L. Petersen, R. R. Wilson (eds.), *Canon, Theology, and Old Testament Interpretation. Essays in honor of Brevard S. Childs*, Philadelphia 1988, 166-75; F. van Dijk-Hemmes, ‘De grote vrouw uit Sunem en de man Gods. Een tweeledige interpretatie van 2 Koningen 4,8-37’, *MARA* 2 (1988/89), 48-50; B. O. Long, *2 Kings* (FOTL 10), Grand Rapids 1991, 51-53; S. M. Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen. Zur Geschichte einer Gattung* (FzB, 69), Würzburg 1992, 63-68; M. E. Shields, ‘Subverting a Man of God, Elevating a Woman: Role and Power Reversals in 2 Kings 4’, *JSOT* 58 (1993), 59-69. A. Schmitt, ‘Die Totenerweckung in 2 Kön 4,8-37. Eine literaturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung’, *BZ* 19 (1975), 13-16, has worked out the structure of what he sees as the original form of the text.

will be the mother of a son within a year. To this promise the woman reacts as follows: “No, my lord, man of God, do not lie to your maid-servant!” A reason for her rejection is not given in the text. In episode IV, bitterly distressed at the death of her son, she goes to Elisha at Carmel. Against him she expresses her feelings (verse 28): “Did I ask my lord for a son? Did I not say: ‘You shall not give me false hope?’”<sup>3</sup> With these words the woman expresses her furious rage about the loss of her son. I interpret her words as an ancient example of that stage in the grief process.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, she shows that it was not her choice to become a mother.

2. The narrative programme in which the restitution of the loss is narrated proceeds in two stages. In episode II the loss seems to have been abolished already in verse 17: “The woman became pregnant. She gave birth to a son ...”. A complication appears, however. The disease and the dying of the son cause a breach in the narrative programme. The German scholar Quasthoff introduced the idea of *Planbruch* in her analysis of stories and novels. The term as such points to a feature or element in the story which hinders or prevents the original aim of the narrative. At the same time, the real point of the narrative is introduced by the element under consideration.<sup>5</sup> This idea of a *Planbruch* can be applied to the story in 2 Kgs. 4. After verse 17 the story seems to have reached its end. A son is born to the woman. However, the son in the meantime gets ill. The character of the disease is unclear; the exclamation ‘my head; my head!’ makes one think of a disease in this part of the body.<sup>6</sup> An exact diagnosis, however, is impossible. The disease leads to death (verse 20): “He (a servant) took him up. He brought him to his mother. He (the son) sat on her knees until the afternoon. He died.” With the dying of the son the original aim is hindered. A new lack comes into being. The second stage of the story covers the end of episode II with the next three episodes. In this second part it is narrated that the woman travels to Elisha (III) that she communicates to him the death of her son (IV) and that the son is revived. I will turn my attention to this last episode. It consists of four parts:

<sup>3</sup> For this translation of the verb שלח Hi. see HALAT, 1393; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 58; Van Dijk-Hemmes, ‘Grote vrouw uit Sunem’, 50.

<sup>4</sup> By way of a modern parallel, see the remarks on “fury” and “anger” as stages in the grief process of the dying ones in: E. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, New York 1969.

<sup>5</sup> U. M. Quasthoff, *Erzählen in Gesprächen. Linguistische Untersuchungen zu Strukturen und Funktionen am Beispiel einer Kommunikationsform des Alltags* (Kommunikationen und Institutionen 1), Tübingen 1980, 27, 53-60.

<sup>6</sup> Most probably a sun-stroke: J. A. Montgomery, H. S. Gehman, *The Book of Kings* (ICC, Edinburgh 1951, 367; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige. 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 292; Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings*, 57.

A	Ascertaining by Gehazi that the son really died	31-32
B	Prayer and ritual by Elisha to revive the son	33-34
B'	The son becomes warm anew, sneezes and opens his eyes.	35
A'	The woman receives her living son.	36-37

Verses 31-37 contain a secondary narrative programme. This can be formulated as follows: the son regains his life and the woman regains her son. A question of interest is: by what means does this happen? Who is the agent and who is really the protagonist in this twofold restoration? In this account Elisha executes four acts:

- (a) he enters the upstairs room;
- (b) he closes the door behind him;
- (c) he prays to YHWH and
- (d) he executes ritual acts.

After the saying of the prayer and the execution of the ritual acts, the son starts to revive. Consequently, it might be supposed that the sequence of prayer and ritual accomplishes the rebirth of the son. But, though he may be the agent, Elisha is not the real protagonist of the twofold restoration – mother receiving her son, son receiving his life. For the statement that Elisha had given back life to the son overlooks some vital elements in the textual unit.

The mode of narration is that of the *passivum divinum*. This term describes the phenomenon whereby in the passive voice God can be the implied subject of an act. The prayer of Elisha is directed towards YHWH, but it is not stated in clear words that YHWH is the achiever of the revival. That he is rests on interpretation. Within the language game of narratology Elisha is but a helper. By his prayer and by the ritual he urges YHWH to revive the son.

A few times the noun ‘ritual’ has been used. It refers to the following act of Elisha (verse 34): “He stood up. He laid down on the boy. He placed his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands.<sup>7</sup> So he bowed over him”. In a ritual act Elisha places parts of his body on the corresponding parts of the boy. On a narrative level these ritual acts are parallel to the prayer to YHWH. An answer to the question of what exactly Elisha is doing here and what religious meaning the ritual has cannot be provided within the framework of a structural analysis of a textual unit. The structural reading will now be closed by asking whether there are

<sup>7</sup> Following the *Q'rê*, pace H.-J. Stipp, *Elischa – Propheten – Gottesmänner: Die Kompositionsgeschichte des Elischazyklus und verwandter Texte, rekonstruiert auf der Basis von Text- und Literaturkritik zu 1 Kön 20,22 und 2 Kön 2–7* (ATSAT 24), St Ottilien 1987, 269.

parallels in the Hebrew Bible or in the ancient Near East and, if there are, what light they can shed on our text.

## 2. Religio-historical backgrounds

### 2.1. Biblical material

Within the Hebrew Bible there are no complete parallels to 2 Kgs. 4:34. It is not impossible, however, that 1 Kgs. 17:21 refers to an act comparable to that in 2 Kgs. 4. In 1 Kgs. 17:17-24 it is narrated that the son of a widow from Sarepta was revived from death. This textual unit is nowadays generally seen as a literary duplicate of 2 Kgs. 4:8-37. It is claimed – with sound argument – that 2 Kgs. 4 contains a more original version and that 1 Kgs. 17 is a later revision in which the theme is transported to Elijah.<sup>8</sup> In 1 Kgs. 17:21 the ritual is depicted in one clause: “Then he stretched himself three times over the child”. The teller of the miraculous story in the Elijah tradition has smoothed out the concrete character of the ritual act. Besides, the ritual act is surrounded by prayers, before and after. A further insight into the meaning and significance of Elisha’s act cannot be gained from 1 Kgs. 17. Therefore, it will be necessary to consider extra-biblical material from the ancient Near East.

### 2.2. Extra-biblical material

Ancient Israel was, of course, part of the ancient Near Eastern culture. In many instances the authors of the Hebrew Bible adopt a critical stance towards this ancient Near Eastern culture and its religion, but this theological interpretation of reality by the writers of the Bible does not

<sup>8</sup> Thus, among others, G. Fohrer, *Elia* (AThANT 53), Zürich <sup>2</sup>1968, 36; O. H. Steck, *Überlieferung und Zeitgeschichte in den Elia-Erzählungen* (WMANT 26), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1968, 9 n. 1; A. Schmitt, ‘Die Totenerweckung in 1 Kön XVII 17-24: Eine form- und gattungskritische Untersuchung’, *VT* 27 (1977), 454-74.; S. Timm, *Die Dynastie Omri: Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Israels im 9. Jahrhundert vor Christus* (FRLANT 124), Göttingen 1982, 59; Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 57-58. For the view that the same motif – a miraculous revival of a deceased – is historically related both to Elijah and Elisha see: H.-C. Schmitt, *Elisa. Traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur vorklassischen nordisraelitischen Prophetie*, Gütersloh 1972, 153-54; G. Hentschel, *Die Eliaerzählungen: Zum Verhältnis von historischen Geschehen und geschichtlicher Erfahrung* (Erfurter Theologische Studien 33), Leipzig 1977, 188-192; Stipp, *Elischa*, 451-58; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 59; K. A. D. Smelik, ‘The literary Function of 1 Kings 17,8-24’, in: C. Brekelmans, J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies* (BETHl 94), Leuven 1990, 239-43. F. J. M. Maeijer, *Elisha as a Second Elijah*, Apeldoorn 1989, esp. 28-34, holds the view that 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 is dependent on the story in 1 Kgs. 18:20-46.



alter the fact that it makes sense to look for parallels between the Hebrew Bible and other texts from the ancient Near East. Scripture should be read in context by comparing and, when necessary, contrasting.<sup>9</sup>

The first proposal to elucidate 2 Kgs. 4:34 with the help of Babylonian material was made by Samuel Daiches, who drew upon Babylonian incantations as early as 1908. Before referring to the texts, his conclusion will be given: By laying parts of the body of one being on the corresponding members of another, the second being is affected drastically. The outcome is a healing by unity.<sup>10</sup> Daiches has found but a few followers.<sup>11</sup> In a monograph published in 1992, Fischbach has repeated Daiches’ interpretation. A problematical issue in her book is that she only discusses those Mesopotamian texts that were already known to Daiches. Besides, she refers to the inscriptions only in translation without discussing the Sumerian or Akkadian originals.<sup>12</sup> A proper evaluation of Daiches’ view must contain two elements: an analysis of the textual corpus known to us and a reconsideration of his conclusions drawn from the material.

### 2.2.1. The texts

Daiches mentioned four texts, which will now be discussed.

#### a) *Utukkū limnūtu* IV 180

*Utukkū limnūtu*, “evil spirits”, is a Neo-Assyrian collection of incantations and antidotal rituals, which is mainly known from cuneiform copies found in the library of Assurbanipal in Nineveh.<sup>13</sup> The textual unit that will be discussed here is part of a larger bilingual incantation. In this ritual a threatening demon is addressed, in the name of the deity Ea, by an incantation priest. From the literary context one forms the impression that this text is an incantation in the case of disease. The cause of the illness is seen in a threat by a demon, but it is unclear *which* demon. This is why the

<sup>9</sup> See the fundamental remarks by W. W. Hallo, ‘Compare and Contrast’, in: W. W. Hallo, B.W. Jones, G.L. Mattingly (eds.), *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature. Scripture in Context III* (ANETS 8), Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter 1990, 1-30.

<sup>10</sup> S. Daiches, ‘Zu II. Kön. IV, 32. Elišas Handlung durch babylonische Beschwörungstextstellen erklärt’, *OLZ* 11 (1908), 492-93.

<sup>11</sup> Only in the publications of Hentschel, *Elijaerzählungen*, 193 n. 550; Schmitt, *Elisa*, 185 n. 31; Stipp, *Elischa*, 285 n. 29; Long, *2 Kings*, 60, are his ideas quoted with approval.

<sup>12</sup> Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 75-79. Her use of the sources is rather careless. Her interpretation seems to rest on an obsolete article by S. Landesdorfer, ‘Der Ritus der Totenerweckungen’, *ZKTh* 42 (1918), 842-46.

<sup>13</sup> See C. Daxelmüller, M.-L. Thomsen, ‘Bildzauber im Alten Mesopotamien’, *Anthropos* 77 (1982), 34; M. J. Geller, *Forerunners to udug-hul. Sumerian Exorcistic Incantations* (FAS 12), Stuttgart 1985; T. Nash, ‘Devils, demons and disease. Folklore in Ancient Near Eastern rites of atonement’, in: Hallo, Jones, Mattingly (eds.), *The Bible in the Light of Cuneiform Literature*, 57-88.

demon is addressed through a special formula: ‘whether you are an evil spirit, whether you are the spirit of an unburied deceased, whether you are the spirit of a young woman who died in labour, etc’. In our text the demon is warned not to touch the body of the sick:

- 180 s a g - z u s a g - g á - n a n a m - b a - d a - a b - g á' - g á'  
*qaq-qad-ka ana qaq-qa-di-šú la ta-šak-kán*  
 181 š u - z u š u - n a n a m - b a - d a - a n - g á - g á  
*qa-ti-ka ana qa-ti-šú la ta-šak-kán*  
 182 g ì r - z u g ì r - n a n a m - b a - d a - a n - g á - g á  
*še-ep-ka ana še-pi-šú la ta-šak-kán*
- 180 You shall not lay your head on his head.  
 181 You shall not lay your [hand] on his hand.  
 182 You shall not lay your foot on his foot.<sup>14</sup>

The text seems to imply that by an act of touching the life-devastating power of the demon could be transmitted to the body of the threatened human being. This transfer of evil power must be avoided in order that the effective execution of the incantation is not distorted.

b) z i - p à incantation I:139-144

In a second text mentioned by Daiches, an expression comparable to 2 Kgs. 4,34 seems to occur. It concerns an incantation which is named after the repeating Sumerian refrain in it: z i - a n - n a h e - p à z i - k i h e - p à ‘by heaven be it conjured; by earth be it conjured.’<sup>15</sup> The context is comparable to the context of the text just discussed. A human being is threatened by an unknown demon. White wool, which is twined while spinning, must be bound to the head of the bed and to the side-wall of the bed of the ill person. Black wool, twined at spinning, must be bound to his right hand.<sup>16</sup> Then a series of demons and evil spirits is named. They are the subject of the following clause:

- 139 SAG-DU - g a - n e - n e                      *qaq-qa-su-nu*  
 140 SAG-DU - g a - a - n i - t a                      *a-na qaq-qa-di-šú*  
 141 š u - n e - n e š u - a - n i - t a                      *qa-ti-šú-nu ana qa-ti-šú*  
 142 g ì r - n e - n e g ì r - a - n i - t a                      *še-pi-šú-nu ana še-pi-šú*

<sup>14</sup> CT 16 xi, Col. VI 5-10; transcription and translation: R. C. Thompson, *The Devils and Evil Spirits of Babylonia* (LSTTS 14/1), London 1903, 44-47. For an outline of the relevant inscriptions: Thompson, *Devils*, xvii; R. Borger, *HKL I*, 545; *HKL II*, 286-87.

<sup>15</sup> On this wording see A. Falkenstein, *Die Haupttypen der sumerischen Beschwörung literarisch untersucht* (LSS NF 1), Leipzig 1931, 34-35.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Ezek. 13:18.

143 b a - r a - a n - t e - g á - e - n e      a-a iš-x-nu  
 144 b a - r a - a n - g i<sub>4</sub> - g i<sub>4</sub> - e - n e      a-a it-hu-ú

139 (They) may their head  
 140 on his head,  
 141 their hands on his hands,  
 142 their feet on his feet,  
 143 not lay (?) and  
 144 not reach.<sup>17</sup>

The translation of line 143 is problematical. Poebel made the observation that the Sumerian and Akkadian verbs are standing in a chiasitic order.<sup>18</sup> The Sumerian verbal form *ba-ra-an-te-gá-e-ne* (l. 143) is correctly rendered with the Assyrian phrase *a-a it-hu-ú* “they may not reach” in line 144. It is, however, questionable whether the other two verbal forms are correct renderings. Here it must be observed that:

1. The reading by Daiches of *iš-ku-nu* is uncertain.
2. The Sumerian verbal form *ba-ra-an-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-e-ne* is ambiguous. Let us consider each of these two points in turn.
  - a. The reading *iš-ku-nu* is uncertain. In Haupt’s edition of the text, on which Daiches’ observations are based, the second cuneiform sign is read as a damaged sign KU. Norris, in II R17, gives a damaged sign too. It is, however, unclear which sign Norris has read, if any. The legible rests seem to indicate an original sign RAD. This sign, however, does not lead to a significant meaning of the Assyrian verbal form. The tablet was collated by Borger in the British Museum.<sup>19</sup> According to Borger, a sign KU – and thus *iš-ku-nu* – is very improbable. In his view, a sign NUN should be read, which would lead to a verbal form: *iš-nun(?) - nu* “they are equal with”. In that case the text should be interpreted as if the demons were instructed not to become one with the body of the sick and threatened human being.
  - b. The meaning of the Sumerian verbal form *ba-ra-an-gi<sub>4</sub>-gi<sub>4</sub>-e-ne*. This verbal form is a conjugation of the Sumerian verb *gi<sub>4</sub>* (-*gi<sub>4</sub>*). This verb has a wide variety of meanings.<sup>20</sup> However, none of these

<sup>17</sup> II R 17, Obv. II:66-71 = P. Haupt, *Akkadische und sumerische Keilschrifttexte*, Leipzig 1881, no. 11, 90-91 II:66-71. Recent reedition: R. Borger, ‘Die erste Tafel der z i - p à - Beschwörungen (AKST 11)’, in: M. Dietrich, W. Röllig (eds.), *lišān mithurti* (FS W. von Soden; AOAT 1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, 8-9.

<sup>18</sup> A. Poebel, ‘Sumerische Untersuchungen’, *ZA* 38 (1929), 92-93.

<sup>19</sup> Borger, ‘Erste Tafel’, 9.

<sup>20</sup> See B. Hübner, A. Reizimmer, *Inim Kiengi II. Sumerisch-Deutsches Glossar in zwei Bänden. Band I: A-L*, Marktredwitz 1985, 328-30; K. Oberhuber, *Sumerisches Lexikon zu „Georg Reisner, Sumerisch-babylonische Hymnen nach Tontafeln griechischer Zeit (Berlin 1896)“ (SBH) und verwandten Texten* (ISL 1), Innsbruck 1990, 173-74.

Taking everything into account, it seems that this text, which was of great importance to Daiches, must be set aside for the time being as a parallel to 2 Kgs. 4:34. It is to be hoped that in the future new parallel Mesopotamian material can clarify the pertinent text.

Daiches' third Mesopotamian text seems to be a clear parallel to 2 Kgs. 4:34, especially in the form in which it is quoted by him: 'His pure mouth he has laid on my mouth.' However, these words are spoken by an incantation priest who is indicating that he has received certain power from the deity Ea. Daiches read this clause apart from its context. The context here is that of legitimization, an element in many Mesopotamian incantations. The priest presents himself over against the demon or evil spirit as the representative of the deity Ea or of the deity Marduk.<sup>24</sup> Now follows the direct context of the quoted clause:

<sup>21</sup> The solution of this problem by Poebel, ‘Sumerische Untersuchungen’, 92, who interprets *b a - r a - n - g i<sub>4</sub> - g i<sub>4</sub> - e - n e* as a corruption for *\*b a - r a - a n - g á - g á - e - n e*, seems attractive, since Sumerian *g á* (- *g á*) is often rendered with Akkadian *šakānu* ‘to lay; place’. Moreover, a meaningful sentence is created. The ‘corruption’, however, rests on an uncertain reading in the Assyrian column of the inscription. Moreover, *g á* and *g i<sub>4</sub>* are phonetically unrelated, since the /*g*/ in *g á* is the rendition of a guttural different from the normal /*g*/, namely of the /*g̃*/. See also Borger, ‘Erste Tafel’, 9.

<sup>24</sup> See Falkenstein, *Haupttypen*, 23-27; G. Conteneau, *La magie chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*, Paris 1947, 139-40.

- 58 e n - g a l <sup>d</sup>E n - k i - k e <sub>4</sub> m u - u n - š i - i n - g i n - n a  
 EN.GAL<sup>u</sup> (*bēlu rabû*) <sup>d</sup>E - a i š - p u r - a n - n i  
 59 t u <sub>6</sub> - k ù - g a - a - n i t u <sub>6</sub> - m u g á l - l a - n a  
*ta-a-šú el-lu ana te-e-a i š-kun*  
 60 k a - k ù - g a - a - n i k a - m u g á l - l a - n a  
*pi-i-šú el-lu ana pi-ia i š-kun*  
 61 u š <sub>11</sub> - k ù - g a - a - n i u š <sub>11</sub> - m u g á l - l a - n a  
*i-mat-su el-lu ana im-ti-ia i š-kun*  
 62 š u <sub>12</sub> - k ù - g a - a - n i š u <sub>12</sub> - m u g á l - l a - n a  
*ik-rib-šú el-lu ana ik-ri-bi-ia i š-kun*
- 54 I am the man of Ea/Enki.  
 55 I am the man of Damkina.  
 56 I am the messenger of Asalluhi/Marduk<sup>25</sup>!  
 57 To heal the man in his illness  
 58 the great god Ea/Enki has send me.  
 59 He laid his pure incantation in my incantation.  
 60 He laid his pure word in my word.  
 61 He laid his pure spell<sup>26</sup> in my spell.  
 62 He laid his pure prayer in my prayer.<sup>27</sup>

The self-presentation formula with which the priest makes himself known to the demon or evil spirit, contains a magical legitimation of the priestly word. Not he (the priest) but Ea/Enki (the god of wisdom and exorcism) is the actual incantator. Differently from what Daiches supposed, the text does not describe a ritual act in which parts of the body of one being are laid on corresponding members of another, thus transferring divine or demonic power. This becomes even more clear from the Sumerian version of the text. There, one would expect as parallel to the Assyrian verb *šakānu*, ‘to lay; to place’ a form of the Sumerian verb *g a r / g á*, this being the usual equivalent. The Sumerian version has in fact the verb *g á l* ‘to be (identical)’. Consequently the Sumerian version underscores the

<sup>25</sup> The deity Asalluhi is a son of Ea/Enki. Asalluhi was a god of incantations with a cult-centre in Kuara in Southern Babylonia. Later, an identification of Asalluhi with Marduk took place. Asalluhi became one of the seven main names for Marduk. See W. Sommerfeld, *Der Aufstieg Marduks: Die Stellung Marduks in der babylonischen Religion des zweiten Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (AOAT 213), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1983, 13-18, 78 n. 4; W. G. Lambert, ‘An Address of Marduk to the Demons’, *AfO* 17 (1954/56), 311 n. 5, interprets Asalluhi as a deity of Hurrian lineage.

<sup>26</sup> Against Falkenstein, *Haupttypen*, 26, who reads u h<sub>4</sub>, ‘spittle’; Conteneau, *Magie*, 140; Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 75, who translate comparably.

<sup>27</sup> CT 16, 2:65-79. Transcription and translation: Thompson, *Devils*, 8-9; Falkenstein, *Haupttypen*, 24.26. For an outline of the manuscripts under consideration see Thompson, *Devils*, xvii; Borger, *HKL* I, 545; *HKL* II, 286. The text has a forerunner in a Sumerian Udug-hul incantation; see Geller, *Forerunners*, 22:36-40.

interpretation that the priestly word is identical with the divine word. The Akkadian noun *pû*, ‘mouth’, stands here metaphorically for that which leaves the mouth: ‘word; saying’.<sup>28</sup> In consequence the text under consideration falls away as a parallel to 2 Kgs. 4.

d) *Utukkû limnûtu* III 182-183

Something similar must be said about the fourth text presented by Daiches. It contains a bilingual prayer of an incantation priest to Ea/Enki:

- 182    t u<sub>6</sub> - m u   t u<sub>6</sub> - k ù - g a - a - n i   g a r - r a - a b  
           *ta-a-ka el-lu ana te-e-a šu-kun*  
 183    k a - m u   k a - k ù - g a - a - n i   g a r - r a - a b  
           *pi-i-ka KÛ(ellu) a-na<sup>29</sup> pi-ia šu-kun*

- 182    Lay your pure spell in my spell.  
 183    Lay your pure word in my word.<sup>30</sup>

The priest expresses his hope that Ea/Enki will bless him in such a way that he can successfully execute his incantation.

The discussion of the textual material brought to our attention by Daiches is thus disappointing, in so far as three of the four texts turn out to contain no clear parallel with 2 Kgs. 4:34. Fortunately, the corpus of parallel texts can now be extended with three more texts.

e) *Utukkû limnûtu* V 186-188

The text to be discussed is part of an incantation against evil spirits. The lines to be considered are found in the introductory part of the incantation, where the situation is described. From the context it becomes clear that the text deals with a person whose body has become impure, since:

- 186    š u - n i   i n - r a   š u - a - n i - š è   i m - m i<sup>31</sup> - i n - g a r  
           *qa-as-su im-has-ma ana qa-ti-šú iš-kun*  
 187    g i r - n i   i n - r a   g i r - a - n i - š è   i m - m i<sup>32</sup> - i n - g a r  
           *še-ip-sú im-has-ma ana še-pi-šú iš-kun*

<sup>28</sup> See, among others, E. Dhorme, ‘L’emploi métaphorique des noms des parties du corps en Hébreu’, *RB* 30 (1929), 533-539; H.W. Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*, München 1973, 120-122.

<sup>29</sup> Rm. 541 has the variant *ana*.

<sup>30</sup> CT 16, 7:266-269; transcription and translation: Thompson, *Devils*, 44-47. See also Thompson, *Devils*, xvii; Borger, *HKL* I, 545; *HKL* II, 286.

<sup>31</sup> Variant: m i .

<sup>32</sup> Variant: m i .

188    s a g - g á - n i i n - r i   s a g - g á - a - n i - š è  
          i m - m i<sup>33</sup> - i n - g a r  
          qaq-qa-su im-has-ma ana qaq-qa-di-šú iš-kun

186    With his hand he hit and he laid it (= his hand) on his hand.  
 187    With his foot he hit and he laid (it) on his foot.  
 188    With his head he hit and he laid (it) on his head.<sup>34</sup>

In these three clauses the part of a body mentioned first – ‘his hand’, ‘his foot’, ‘his head’ – refers to the demon, who threatened the human being by hitting him. By touching the corresponding members the evil power entered into the human body.

f) An incantation against *ardat lilī* Rev. II:6'-15'

A very fragmentary bilingual incantation against the female demon *ardat lilī* shares some features with the text just discussed:

6'	[š u] - n i i n - r a [š u] - n i - š è i m - m i - i n - g a r	<i>qa-as-su il-pu-ut-ma a-na qa-ti-šu iš-ta-kan</i>
9'	g ì r - n i i n - r a g ì r - n i - š è i m - m i - i n - g a r	GIR <sup>II</sup> (šepī)-šu il-pu-ut-ma a-na GIR <sup>II</sup> (šepī)-šu iš-ta-kan
12'	s a g - g á - n a i n - r a [ s ] a g - g á - n i - š è [ i m - m ] i - i n - ú s	<i>qaq-qa-su il-pu-ut-ma qaq-qa-su uš-x-[                      ]<sup>35</sup></i>

6'-8'    With his hand he caught hold and he laid (it) on his hand.  
 9'-11'    With his foot he caught hold and he laid (it) on his foot.  
 12'-15'    With his head he caught hold and he led(?) (it) to his head.

As appears from Rev. II:3<sup>36</sup> the context is that of an incantation against the demon *ardat lilī* ‘the young woman of the night’. Lackenbacher has shown

<sup>33</sup> Variant: m i .

<sup>34</sup> CT 16, 16 vi:7-11. Transcription and translation: Thompson, *Devils*, 78-79.

<sup>35</sup> Sm. 48 (edited by S. A. Smith, *Miscellaneous Assyrian Texts of the British Museum with Textual Notes*, Leipzig 1887, no. 14) + Sm. 5 (edited by S. H. Langdon, ‘Assyrian grammatical texts’, *RA* 13 (1916), 190)]. Recent reedition by S. Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lilī*’, *RA* 65 (1971), 122f., 143ff.

<sup>36</sup> *inim-inim-ma ki-sikil-lil-lá-kam* ‘incantation against Ardat Lilī’.

that the character of this female demon is marked by a much used epithet *ardatu la šimtu*, ‘a woman of marriageable age whose life did not come to its destiny’. The demon is to be understood as the spirit of a deceased woman whose life has been unfulfilled in one way or another. She could have died young and childless, or when she was in labour. The demon is seen as a purposeless wandering spirit looking for revenge on young women.<sup>37</sup> The immediate context of the text under consideration gives no clear help as to the identity of the subject of the verbal forms, whether the demon or the incantation priest.

#### g) *eṭlu* text

This obscurity is not present in the final text to be discussed. This inscription was interpreted by Pinches as describing a marriage ceremony. For some time the text was incorporated – on that basis – in studies and discussion on ceremony and ritual on the occasion of marriage in Mesopotamia.<sup>38</sup> Later, Meißner interpreted the inscription as a paradigmatic text containing handsome clauses from the literature on incantations.<sup>39</sup> Some 20 years ago, Lackenbacher proved that the text under consideration is neither a marriage ceremony nor a paradigmatic practice-text.<sup>40</sup> By comparison with two incantations against the female demon *ardat lili*, she demonstrated that the text should be interpreted in all likelihood as an incantation against a demon. She was thinking of the spirit of a deceased person whose life stood under a bad constellation, a person who remained unmarried or died childless. This fate is described in col I:1-23. In Lackenbacher’s view, this part of the inscription refers to the marriage manqué of the young man who died and became a demon. Her view stands contrary to the surmise of Pinches, who interpreted it more or less as a prospect. Her interpretation of col I:1-23 yields, however, one problem. The Assyrian noun *eṭlu*, ‘young man’, indicates a living person and is never used to refer to a demon in compositions from the realm of magic. Therefore, I propose to read col I:1-23 of this text as a description of one or more victims of an unnamed demon.

<sup>37</sup> See Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lili*’, 148-52. The demon can be equated with the night demon *lilith* known from Isa. 34,14; cf. H. Wildberger, *Jesaja. 3. Teilband* (BK, X/3), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1982, 1347-49. On her see, among others: W. Farber, ‘(W)ardat lili(m)’, *ZA* 79 (1989), 14-35; W. Fauth, ‘Lilits und Astarten in aramäischen, mandäischen und syrischen Zaubertexten’, *WO* 17 (1986), 66-94; W. Krebs, ‘Lilith – Adams erste Frau’, *ZRGG* 27 (1975), 141-152; Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lili*’; P. P. Vértesalji, ‘“La déesse nue élamite” und der Kreis der babylonischen “Lilû”-Dämonen’, *Iranica Antiqua* 26 (1991), 101-48.

<sup>38</sup> See S. Greengus, ‘Old Babylonian Marriage Ceremonies and Rites’, *JCS* 20 (1966), 55 n. 1.

<sup>39</sup> B. Meißner, *Altorientalische Texte und Untersuchungen* (AOF 2), Breslau 1920, 48-53.

<sup>40</sup> Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lili*’.



Another part of the text which made Pinches think of a marriage ceremony was the self-presentation in col II:11-15: ‘I am the son of a prince. Your womb will be filled with gold and silver. You will be my wife and I will be your man.’ However, Meißner correctly showed that this phrase refers to an attempt of a spirit to seduce a nubile woman.<sup>41</sup> It is in this context that the parallel with 2 Kgs. 4:34 is to be found:

1	g u r u š - d i n g i r - n u - t u k u - r a	<i>la be-el</i> DIN[GIR( <i>ili</i> ) ]
	g a b a i m - m a - a n - r e - e š	<i>im-tah-ha-ru-[u ]</i>
	š u - n e - n e - a	<i>qa-ti-šú-nu</i>
	š u - n i b a - a n - g a r - r e - e š	<i>ana qa-ti-šú i[š-ku-nu ]</i>
5	g i r - n e - n e - a	<i>še-pi-[šú-nu]</i>
	g i r - n i b a - a n - g a r - r e - e š	<i>ana še-pi-š[ú iš-ku-nu ]</i>
	g ù - n i	<i>ki-š[a-ad-su-nu ]</i>
	g ù - d a i m - m a - a n - g a r	<i>it-[tí] ki-š[á-di-šu GAR ]</i>
	n i - t e - a - n i	<i>ra-ma-an-šú</i>
10	š u - b a l b a - a b - š i - i n - a k - a	<i>uš-te-pil-lu</i>

1-2 They have beco[me] equal to those who have no god.

3-4 They placed their hands<sup>42</sup> on his hand.

5-6 They placed their feet<sup>43</sup> on his foot.

7-8 They placed their necks<sup>44</sup> on his neck.

9-10 (Thus) they have changed his essence for (theirs).<sup>45</sup>

This text makes clear the function of laying parts of the body of one being on the corresponding members of another being. It is the way in which, at least in this inscription, a human being becomes possessed by a demon.<sup>46</sup> In other words, it is the means of transferring evil power from a spirit or a demon to a threatened human being.

<sup>41</sup> Meißner, *Texte*, 50.

<sup>42</sup> Sumerian: ‘his hand’.

<sup>43</sup> Sumerian: ‘his foot’.

<sup>44</sup> Sumerian: ‘his neck’.

<sup>45</sup> 81-7-1,98 = BM 42338 parallel to K. 443; recent reedition by Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lili*’, 124-31.

<sup>46</sup> So: S. Lackenbacher, ‘Note sur l’*ardat lili*’, 153.

### 2.2.2. Interpretation

The Mesopotamian material shows that the view of Daiches is basically correct. The religious context of the ritual acts is time and again the world of magic. In the texts discussed reference is made to the transfer of demonic or evil power.

It should be remarked that such an act occurs only in a restricted number of cuneiform inscriptions and that it is not present in other defensive rituals such as *Šurpu*,<sup>47</sup> *Maqlû*,<sup>48</sup> *Lipšur*.<sup>49</sup> Some of these texts, and others as well, reflect similar but distinct phenomena.<sup>50</sup>

## 3. Theological interpretation

### 3.1. A magical ritual

The comparison with extra-biblical material provokes some ideas, which may be presented as hypotheses.

It can be assumed that the ritual act carried out by Elisha on the deceased son of the woman from Shunem has a magical character.<sup>51</sup> Magic may be defined as the manipulation of impersonal forces either to distort normal life – ‘black magic’ – or to save humanity. The latter is what happens in the Elisha story. The prophet manipulates forces to revive the

<sup>47</sup> E. Reiner, *Šurpu. A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations* (AfO Beiheft 11), Osnabrück 1970.

<sup>48</sup> On *Maqlû* texts and related counter-rituals see, among others, G. Meier, *Die assyrische Beschwörungsserie Maqlû* (AfO Beiheft 2), Berlin 1937; G. Meier, ‘Studien zur Beschwörungsserie Maqlû’, *AfO* 21 (1966), 70-81; T. Abusch, ‘Mesopotamian Anti-Witchcraft Literature Texts and Studies Part 1: The Nature of *Maqlû*, its Character, Divisions, and Calendrial Setting’, *JNES* 33 (1974), 251-62; T. Abusch, *Babylonian Witchcraft Literature. Case Studies* (BJS 132), Atlanta 1987; T. Abusch, ‘An Early Form of the Witchcraft Ritual *Maqlû* and the Origin of the Babylonian Ceremony’, in: T. Abusch, J. Huehnergard, P. Steinkeller (eds.), *Lingering over Words* (FS W. L. Moran; HSS 37), Atlanta 1990, 1-57.

<sup>49</sup> Edited by: E. Reiner, ‘*Lipšur* Litanies’, *JNES* 15 (1956), 129-49.

<sup>50</sup> We find a ritual act in which the head, the hands and the feet of a man possessed by a *gallû*-demon are bound (*Šurpu* V-VI 160-161). Further, a passage from *Maqlû* in which it is said against a sorceress: ‘I took your mouth. I took your tongue. I caught your watching eyes. I caught your walking feet. I caught your stalking knees. I caught your wielding arms’ (*Maqlû* III 94-99). In Ugarit forms of magic by touching occur, especially in the tales on Keret and Aqhat (*KTU* 1.16 [Keret III] v26-50 and *KTU* 1.19 [Aqhat III] ii15ff,22ff). In these epic texts the theme of the laying of parts of the body on the corresponding members of another being is absent, however. From Greek antiquity the remark in Aelianus, *De natura animalium*, XVI 28, must be noted.

<sup>51</sup> See also H. D. Preuss, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* 1, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1991, 296-97; Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 69.

son.<sup>52</sup> Elisha’s magical ritual has the character of a ‘mirror-ritual’. The inscriptions from Mesopotamia imply the notion that disease can be the outcome of events in which a demon touches the body of a human being. By the term ‘mirror-ritual’ or ‘counter-ritual’ is meant a procedure whereby the person who cures the sick reaches the opposite effect by using the same means. The story-teller in 2 Kgs. 4 leaves open the question of the cause of the disease of the son. In view of the religious background of Elisha’s acts of healing, the possibility might at least be entertained that the author implies the cause of the illness to be possession by a demon.

The comparison with inscriptions from Mesopotamia suggests a further interesting observation. In all of the texts, three parts or pairs of parts of the body are mentioned. Though the number is always three, there are differences in the listing of specific members:

Text	Member	Member	Member
2 Kgs. 4:34	mouth	eyes	hands
(a) <i>Utukkū limnūtu</i> IV 180ff.	head	hand	foot
(e) <i>Utukkū limnūtu</i> V 186ff.	hand	foot	head
(f) incantation against <i>ardat lilī</i>	hand	foot	head
(g) <i>eṭlu</i> text	hands	feet	necks

It is a remarkable fact that in all of the texts the extremities of the body are enumerated. This observation gives ground for the surmise that all constitute examples of merismus. A *merismus* is a figure of speech in which by mentioning the outermost parts the whole is implied.<sup>53</sup> In the Hebrew Bible the expression ‘from Dan to Beersheba’ refers to the whole of Israel. In the texts discussed the mention of the extremities of the body could indicate not only that the extremities were laid on the corresponding members but that contact with the whole of the body took place.<sup>54</sup>

### 3.2. Interpretation

What theological conclusions can be drawn from the material presented? From the point of view of methodology this is an improper question! Facts

<sup>52</sup> For a definition of magic, see, among others: J.W. Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament*, Sheffield <sup>2</sup>1984, 47-51; J. Bottéro, *RIA* 6, 201-02; J.K. Kuemmerlin-McLean, *Divination and Magic in the Religion of Ancient Israel* (PhD Vanderbilt University 1987); P. Kloos, *Culturele antropologie: Een Inleiding*, Assen-Maastricht <sup>5</sup>1991, 105-06.

<sup>53</sup> On this figure of speech see, among others: H.A. Brongers, ‘Merismus, Synekdoche und Hendiadys in der biblisch-hebräischen Sprache’, *OTS* 14 (1965), 100-14; J. Krašovec, *Der Merismus im Biblisch-Hebräischen und Nordwestsemitischen* (BO 33), Roma 1977.

<sup>54</sup> So Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 77, who does not refer to this figure of speech.

as such do not lead to conclusions. The scholarly observer can arrange – thus interpreting – the facts or can propose a relation between them by formulating an hypothesis. Such a hypothesis should then be tested by way of falsification. In exegesis and even within the comparative approach the surmises of scholars are all too often dressed up as conclusions.

In the light of the texts discussed some hypotheses will be developed, by relating the texts to a broader context. The stories about Elisha are in their final form part of a broader textual unit. Ever since the pioneering work of Martin Noth this broader unit has been called the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>55</sup> This term refers to a composition which contains at least the biblical books Deuteronomy to 2 Kgs. and possibly even Genesis 2:4 to 2 Kgs. 25. This theologically laden historical epic originated in Babylon as a reflection on the situation of the exile. The composition tries to answer questions like: how is it possible that the chosen people, in spite of the Exodus from Egypt, in spite of the conquest of the promised land, in spite of the Davidic dynasty, yet was nevertheless carried away into Babylonian exile? The answer is given in the form of theologically modelled history-writing. The cause of the exile is seen in the cumulation of guilt by the people, who continued to sin against the law of God despite prophetic reproaches.

Magic belongs to a forbidden area. Within the Deuteronomistic History, in Deut. 18:9-12, magic, mantic practices, incantation, sorcery and the consultation of ghosts are designated as ‘abominations of the nations’. They are viewed as a non-Yahwistic means of divination.<sup>56</sup> Divination as such is not forbidden, but rather the use of these practices to achieve a particular end. In the Book of Kings Manasseh is reproached for the fact that he “practised sorcery and soothsaying and appointed exorcisers of the dead and spirits” (2 Kgs. 21:6). This passage shows that the prohibition in Deut. 18 has a broader scope than the area of divination only. Magic as a way to make contact with the divine is forbidden.

Here we encounter a theological anomaly: Elisha is doing something – the execution of a magical ritual – which is, according to the decrees of YHWH, an abomination. This theological anomaly will be interpreted by relating it to an historical framework.

1. The prohibition against magic and related practices in Deut. 18:9ff was enunciated not before the time of Elisha, but after his time. The notion that the words of Deuteronomy were spoken by Moses just before the entrance into the promised land is a literary fiction. The actual book of Deuteronomy was written either in the time of King Josiah or at the end of the Babylonian exile.

<sup>55</sup> M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Tübingen 1943.

<sup>56</sup> See Kuemmerlin-McLean, *Divination and Magic*, 63-102, 114-133, and the commentaries on Deuteronomy.

2. Recent religio-historical research has brought to light a process of development in the religion in Israel. This process cannot yet be described in all its details, but, it becomes more and more clear that from the middle of the eighth century BCE a movement was gaining ground in Israel. This movement is to be characterized as a steady progress from pluriformity to ‘fundamentalism’, which led to the existence of the orthodox form of Yahwism which is known to us for instance from the Deuteronomistic History and from the book of Jeremiah. This process manifests itself in:

- the steady exclusion of the worship of YHWH in the form of an image;<sup>57</sup>
- the gradual abrogation of the worship of the goddess Asherah, the consort of YHWH;<sup>58</sup>
- the growing controversy over the reverence of ‘other deities’;<sup>59</sup>
- the rise of a genuine monotheism;<sup>60</sup>
- the refining of the view of YHWH as the supreme God, who directs history.<sup>61</sup>

From the iconographic data<sup>62</sup> and from the inscriptions in ancient Hebrew excavated at Kuntilet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom<sup>63</sup> a picture of

<sup>57</sup> See, among others: C. Dohmen, *Das Bilderverbot. Seine Entstehung und seine Entwicklung im Alten Testament* (BBB 62), Bonn 1985, esp. 237-273; S. Schroer, *In Israel gab es Bilder* (OBO 74), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1987; R.S. Hendel, ‘The Social Origins of the Aniconic Tradition in Early Israel’, *CBQ* 50 (1988), 365-82; Preuss, *Theologie* 1, 119-24; M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, ‘Jahwe und seine Aschera’. *Anthropomorphes Kultbild in Mesopotamien, Ugarit und Israel. Das biblische Bildverbot* (UBL 9), Münster 1992, esp. 112-117, 158-172.

<sup>58</sup> See the discussion on the ancient Hebrew inscriptions from Kuntilet ‘Ajrud and Khirbet el-Qom and: J. Day, ‘Asherah in the Hebrew Bible and Northwest Semitic Literature’, *JBL* 105 (1986), 385-408; E. S. Gerstenberger, *Jahwe – ein patriarchaler Gott? Traditionelles Gottesbild und feministische Theologie*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1988, 38-50; M. S. Smith, *The early history of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Early Israel*, San Francisco 1990, 80-114; Dietrich, Loretz, ‘Jahwe und seine Aschera’, esp. 77-133; O. Keel, C. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans aufgrund bislang unerschlossener Quellen* (QD 134), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1992, 237-282; with the literature referred to in these publications.

<sup>59</sup> See especially B. Lang, *Monotheism and the Prophetic Minority: An Essay in Biblical History and Sociology* (SWBAS 1), Sheffield 1983.

<sup>60</sup> From the abundance of literature: Lang, *Monotheism*; J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism* (BETHL 91), Leuven 1990; M. Weippert, ‘Synkretismus und Monotheismus. Religionsinterne Konfliktbewältigung im alten Israel’, in: J. Assmann, D. Harth (eds.), *Kultur und Konflikt* (es 1612), Frankfurt am Main 1990, 143-79; Preuss, *Theologie* 1, 124-32.

<sup>61</sup> See H. Niehr, *Der höchstste Gott: Alttestamentliche JHWH-Glaube im Kontext syrisch-kanaanäischer Religion des 1. Jahrtausends v. Chr.* (BZAW 190), Berlin-New York 1990.

<sup>62</sup> See Keel, Uehlinger, *Göttinnen*, 123-321.

the history of religion in Israel emerges. In Iron Age II A and B, the first part of the monarchic period, religion in Israel is predominantly polytheistic and does not deviate from the religion in surrounding areas, such as Ammon, Moab and Edom.<sup>64</sup> A remark in the so-called Nimrud prism of the Assyrian king Sargon II might be interpreted as proof of the existence of polytheistic iconolatry in Northern Israel.<sup>65</sup> Sargon II claims that he took as booty from Samaria in 720 BCE amongst other things: 'the gods in which they trusted'.<sup>66</sup>

3. The magical ritual executed by Elisha on the deceased son of the woman from Shunem is to be interpreted as a hangover from the pluriform and multicoloured phase in the history of religion in Israel. But precisely how?

### 3.3. Literary criticism of the Elisha stories

At this point a literary-critical side-step must be made. There is a consensus amongst scholars that the traditions concerning Elisha originates from prophetic legends. These legends are generally supposed to be prior to the deuteronomistic history. In fact they were so to speak lying on the desk of the deuteronomistic historians. These authors are thought of as having taken over the legends since their point tallies with their own theological insights.<sup>67</sup> This implies a kind of 'intrusion' in the text of the Deuteronomistic History (DtrH). The view that the stories concerning Elisha form an older textual layer within DtrH can be defended at the basis of evidence from 2 Kgs. 4:8-37:

<sup>63</sup> See recently: G. I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, Cambridge 1991, 80f.106; Dietrich, Loretz, "Jahwe und seine Aschera", 94-97; Keel, Uehlinger, *Göttinnen*, 237-82.

<sup>64</sup> See Lang, *Monotheism*, 20; M. D. Coogan, 'Canaanite origins and lineage. Reflections on the religion of Ancient Israel', in: P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion* (FS F.M. Cross), Philadelphia 1987, 115-24; Niehr, *Höchste Gott*, 183-86; Weippert, 'Synkretismus', 150-55.

<sup>65</sup> Thus: C. J. Gadd, 'Inscribed Prisms of Sargon II from Nimrud', *Iraq* 16 (1954), 181; Timm, *Dynastie Omri*, 155.

<sup>66</sup> Sargon II Nimrud Prism IV:32; see B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (SHANE 2), Leiden 1992, 28-31.

<sup>67</sup> See the recent Introductions to the Old Testament; A. D. H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel Between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History*, London 1983, 109; A. Lemaire, 'Joas, roi d'Israël et la première rédaction du cycle d'Elisée', in: C. Brekelmans, J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies* (BETHL 94), Leuven 1990, 245-54.

1. The specific Deuteronomistic phraseology is absent in this story.<sup>68</sup>
2. In the text there are no traces of the typical view of history which we associate with the deuteronomistic historians.
3. Verse 23 reports the reaction of the husband to the request of the woman from Shunem to visit the man of God on the mountain of Carmel. He says: “Why do you want to go today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath”. His utterance refers to the situation before the exile, when the Sabbath was not yet a weekly festival, but still related to the cycle of the moon.<sup>69</sup>

Consequently, there is much to commend the view that the stories concerning Elisha are prior to the DtrH. The presence of a magical ritual within a broader literary composition that rejects magic as such can be explained as follows.

The Elisha stories reflect a kind of theology older than the classical, orthodox, deuteronomistic view. Indeed, so much earlier that it was taken over by the deuteronomistic historians without change. At the point when the Elisha cycle was embedded in the larger historical work, the tradition concerning Elisha had such authority that it was taken over without change. To express this with an anachronism: for the orthodox Yahwist of the deuteronomistic circle the Elisha traditions had ‘canonical’ authority.<sup>70</sup> Or to say the same in the terminology of the hermeneutical philosopher Gadamer: in the seventh century BCE the stories about Elisha were appreciated as a ‘classical’ work. They were seen as an authoritative tradition. They were preserved by theologians (the deuteronomistic historians) who interpreted the stories as an argument for their own theological position.<sup>71</sup> The deuteronomistic historians interpreted the traditions about Elisha precisely by inserting them within a greater literary whole. In doing so they interpreted the ritual act performed by Elisha on the son of the Shunammite woman in another way than I am doing. Apparently, they overlooked the magical side of it.

<sup>68</sup> See M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, esp. 320-70. In the typographical rendering of the different redactional layers in E. Würthwein, *Könige*, 289-90, the *cursive* parts indicating the work of deuteronomistic authors or redactors are missing.

<sup>69</sup> See on this: G. Robinson, *The Origin and Development of the Old Testament Sabbath* (BBET 21), Frankfurt a. Main 1988.

<sup>70</sup> In a way – though different – as the stories concerning the patriarchs had ‘canonical’ authority; see on this R. W. L. Moberley, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament* (Overtures to Biblical Theology), Minneapolis 1992.

<sup>71</sup> H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen <sup>4</sup>1975, esp. 260-65, 274-75, 363-64; see also M. G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis? The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies*, Cambridge 1991, 135-48.

### 3.4. A magical ritual in a Yahwistic perspective

This brings us to the important question of the relation between prayer and ritual in 2 Kgs. 4:33-34. Before Elisha executes the ritual acts he prays: “And he prayed to YHWH”. The issue of the relation between prayer and ritual in 2 Kgs. 4 is generally considered within a literary-critical framework.

Commonly, within the Elisha cycle or, more specifically, within the story of 2 Kgs. 4:8-37 even further literary-critical divisions are made. Within the latter story some duplicates can be pointed out.<sup>72</sup> Besides, some tensions may be discerned within the text.<sup>73</sup> The prophet Elisha is sometimes indicated by his personal name and sometimes by the title ‘man of God’. Moreover, he is twice spoken to as <sup>a</sup>*doni*, ‘my lord’. The son of the Shunamite woman is mentioned as ‘son’ (*ben*), as ‘boy’ (*yeled*) and as ‘lad’ (*na‘ar*). On the basis of these observations hypotheses are formulated regarding the literary growth of the story. The general framework of these hypotheses is the assumption that a primary story has been reworked and revised once or more before being embedded in DtrH.<sup>74</sup> The opinions of exegetes diverge when it comes to questions of detail. They will not be discussed here or set against each other. It must be noted, however, that some scholars make a literary-critical division between the prayer of Elisha and the ritual act. All the literary-critical models agree on the fact that verse 34 – the magical ritual – was part of the original body of the story. However, H.-C. Schmitt reckons the prayer of Elisha to YHWH as a part of a later “Jahwebearbeitung”,<sup>75</sup> whilst Würthwein considers the last part of verse 33 as an element of the latest revision of the story.<sup>76</sup>

These literary-critical divisions do have an interesting theological implication. They can be related to what we have said about the later deuteronomistic interpretation of the ritual act. The significance of the later addition of a prayer to YHWH to an older report of a ritual might be as follows. The addition of the prayer to YHWH neutralizes, as it were, the magical character of the ritual acts executed by Elisha. In this way a diachronic model of the tradition can be developed: the *numen* or the *‘ael* who was supposed to be present at the ritual act is interpreted in later times as YHWH. In doing this the deuteronomistic historians have placed the magical ritual in a Yahwistic perspective. On the level of the theology of

<sup>72</sup> See the outline in: Stipp, *Elischa*, 278-80.

<sup>73</sup> See Schmitt, ‘Totenerweckung’, 2-8.

<sup>74</sup> Schmitt, *Elisa*, 93-99, 207-09 (model is followed by Fischbach, *Totenerweckungen*, 69-74); Schmitt, ‘Totenerweckung’, 1-8; Würthwein, *Könige*, 289-94; Stipp, *Elischa*, 294-98, 367-68, 442-51.

<sup>75</sup> Schmitt, *Elisa*, 93-94.

<sup>76</sup> Würthwein, *Könige*, 290, possibly even a late gloss.



the Hebrew Bible one must then remark that healing comes from YHWH and is not secured by mere touching.

Although this interpretation is very plausible, I would like to suggest another. This view is suggested by the fact that not all exegetes who propose a redactional model of the development of the story understand verse 33c (the prayer) and verse 34 (the ritual act) as belonging to two different textual layers.<sup>77</sup> Consequently, there are literary arguments to interpret prayer and ritual as one related act. These can be reinforced by a religio-historical observation. In many, though not in all, Mesopotamian rituals there is a clear connection between both kinds of act: the incantation priest says a prayer before he executes the ritual act.<sup>78</sup> The prayer then has an interrogative character and might be regarded as an intercession. In this view both elements, prayer and ritual act, belong to the same and original layer of the story. This might rejoice the hearts of those who plead for the unity and integrity of Scripture. But my suggestion has a theological implication, or at least a religio-historical one. For on this view too the magical ritual is placed in a Yahwistic perspective. However, the term ‘Yahwistic’ is used differently here. For it is being suggested that YHWH was seen, in an early form of the religion in Israel, rather as Ea/Enki in Mesopotamia: a deity which could be invoked to chase away demonic powers. This earlier form of Yahwism had a broader view of the character of YHWH, broader, that is, than the later deuteronomistic orthodoxy.

#### 4. *Final remark*

The story of Elisha and the Shunammite woman is an expression of change: the woman receives a living boy. In narrating this change the teller of the story expresses his belief in a pre-orthodox form of Yahwism. The author believes YHWH to be able to ‘save’, that is to deliver a person from threatening power, even from death. For the narrator an implied act of YHWH is the cause of this life-restoring change.

<sup>77</sup> Schmitt, ‘Totenerweckung’, 7; Stipp, *Elischa*, 298.

<sup>78</sup> See, for instance, *Šurpu*, especially I and V-VI; *Maqlû*, especially IX, *LKA* 139 with parallels (reedition by K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanction in Israel and Mesopotamia* [SSN 22], Assen, Maastricht 1985, 147-154).

## Chapter VI: From Exodus to Exile: 2 Kings 17:7-20 in the Context of its Co-Text<sup>\*</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Recently, Walter Dietrich has stressed the importance of Martin Noth's insights for ancient Israelite historiographic research. Would Noth not have written his stimulating and influential monograph on the deuteronomistic history writing<sup>1</sup>, "One would read these biblical books primarily in two ways: *either biblicistically* as instructional and factual reports on the history of the people of God *or in an enlightened way* as devotional and inspirational stories of Jewish writers on the fictionally constructed 'history of Israel'."<sup>2</sup> Noth's concern with the *final shape* of the texts in Deuteronomy up to 2 Kings has opened a third way in 'doing history' between 'minimalists' and 'maximalists'; between 'sceptics' and 'realists'. In my view Noth is offering a narrative history by showing how the author of the final text reenacted the strings of events from the Israelite and Judahite past known to him from written evidence and oral tradition so that his theological point of view becomes clear.<sup>3</sup> This paper does not aim at a full description of the Deuteronomistic History writing or at a reformulation of Noth's thesis. I want to confine myself to one textual unit that plays an important role in Noth's view: 2 Kgs. 17:7-20. 2 Kgs. 17:7ff is one of the orations that function as structuring devices throughout DtrH. According to Noth, 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 form a later addition. This view is argued theologically by Noth in saying that the tearing away of the Northern Kingdom

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<sup>\*</sup> This chapter is based on B. Becking, 'From Exodus to Exile: 2 Kings 17:7-20 in the Context of its Co-Text', in: G. Galil, M. Weinfeld (eds.), *Studies in Historical Geography and Biblical Historiography Presented to Zecharia Kallai* (VTSup, 81), Leiden 2000, 215-31.

<sup>1</sup> M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament* Tübingen 1943, 3-110.

<sup>2</sup> W. Dietrich, 'Martin Noth and the Future of the Deuteronomistic History', in: S. L. McKenzie, M.P. Graham (eds.), *The History of Israel's Traditions: The Heritage of Martin Noth* (JSOT Sup 182), Sheffield 1994, 153-75; the quotation is to be found on p. 153.

<sup>3</sup> On the idea of re-enactment see R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926-1928*, Oxford 1994, 282-302; for the concept of a narrative history see A. C. Danto, *Analytical Philosophy of History*, Cambridge 1968; F. R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantical Analysis of the Historian's Language*, Den Haag 1983; H. M. Barstad, 'History and the Hebrew Bible', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 54-60.

from the Davidic dynasty as *πρωτον ψευδος* of the Northern Kingdom is not attested elsewhere in DtrH. The hand of the Deuteronomist is clearly visible in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20. This textual unit, written in the period of the exile, includes Judah when it describes the sins of the Northern Kingdom. In other words, Noth reads this text as an indication that the fates of Judah and Israel were seen as parallel.<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere, I have argued that 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 is not a later addition to an already existing homily, but should be construed as a Josianic text prior to the final redaction of the Book of Kings.<sup>5</sup> In this essay, dedicated to the well-known Israeli scholar Zecharia Kallai, I would like to test Noth's insights concerning 2 Kgs. 17:7-20.

## 2. 2 Kings 17:7-20: Translation and structure

### 2.1. Translation with notes

First I would like to offer a translation of the textual unit under consideration.

- 7 a This happened  
     b because<sup>6</sup> the Israelites sinned against YHWH, their God,  
     c who brought them up from the land of Egypt,  
     d from under the control of Pharaoh, king of Egypt  
     e (because) they revered other gods,  
 8 a walked after the statutes of the nations,  
     b whom YHWH had destroyed<sup>7</sup> for the Israelites  
     c and after those, whom the kings of Israel had  
         installed.  
 9 a The Israelites had done hidden things<sup>8</sup>,  
     b that were not good for YHWH, their God.

<sup>4</sup> Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 85.

<sup>5</sup> B. Becking, 'From Apostasy to Destruction: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria', see p. 104.

<sup>6</sup> The particle *kī* has a causal function here, cf. A. Schoors, 'The Particle כִּי', *OTS* 21 (1981), 264-67.

<sup>7</sup> With N. Lohfink, 'Die Bedeutungen von Hebr. *jrš qal* und *hif*', *BZ NF* 27 (1983), 26-32, *חִיף* *Hif* should be rendered 'to destroy'; pace the traditional translation 'To drive away; to dispossess' as in M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), New York 1988, 203. It should be noted that in the Book of Joshua the 'Canaanites' are not driven away, but either destroyed or incorporated in the Israelite society.

<sup>8</sup> *DCH* III, 286, renders *סֵתַר* with 'to do secretly'. The verb is related with the common semitic root *HB/P*, 'to hide; to do secretly', that is attested in a variety of Semitic languages. Pace the interpretation by F. E. Greenspahn, *Hapax Legomena in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of the Phenomenon and its Treatment since Antiquity with Special Reference to Verbal Forms* (SBL DS 74), Chico 1984, 116, whose translation 'said' is mainly based on the Targum and the Peshitta.

- c They had built for themselves “high-places”<sup>9</sup> in all cities  
 d – from the watchtower to the fortified city.  
 10 a They had set up for themselves pillars and sacred poles  
 b – on every high hill and under every green tree.  
 11 a They had indeed<sup>10</sup> offered in all “high-places” as the nations,  
 b whom YHWH had exiled for them.  
 c They had done evil things to offend YHWH.  
 12 a They had worshiped idols  
 b while YHWH had said to them:  
 c “You shall no do such a thing!”  
 13 a YHWH had warned Israel and Judah  
 by the service of every prophet and every seer:  
 b “Turn back from your evil ways!  
 c Keep my commands and my statutes  
 according to the whole of the law,  
 d that I had commanded your ancestors  
 e and that I transmitted to you  
 by the hand of my servants, the prophets”.  
 14 a But they did not listen.  
 b They were as<sup>11</sup> obstinate as their ancestors,  
 c who did not trust YHWH, their God.  
 15 a They had spurned his statutes, his covenant,  
 b which he had concluded with their ancestors,  
 (a) and the provisions of his law,  
 c which he had laid upon them.  
 d They had walked after the emptiness<sup>12</sup>,  
 e so they became emptiness themselves,  
 (d) and after the nations,  
 f that surrounded them,  
 g while YHWH had ordered them not to act like them.

<sup>9</sup> With W. B. Barrick, ‘What do we really know about “high-places”’, *SEÅ* 45 (1980), 50-57 – and many others – it should be accepted that “*bāmā*” was much more of a ‘temple’ than we have customarily thought”.

<sup>10</sup> The adverb *šm* has asseverative force; cf. C. F. Whitley, ‘Has the Particle *šm* an asseverative Function?’, *Bibl* 55 (1974), 394-98.

<sup>11</sup> The proposition *k* in *kʾrp* has comparative force, so Vulgate; D. Barthelémy, *Critique textuelle de l’Ancien Testament* 1 (OBO 50/1), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1982, 409; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 203, 205; and should not be construed as in indication for the comparativus, *pace* J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London <sup>3</sup>1977, 645. Later generations of Israelites were not more stiff-necked than their ancestors.

<sup>12</sup> The noun *הבל* should not be interpreted as the distorted name of a presumed Canaanite fertility god Hubal who was still worshipped by pre-Islamic Arab tribes; see B. Becking, ‘Does Jeremiah x 3 refer to a Canaanite Deity called Hubal?’, *VT* 43 (1993), 555-57; *pace* H. M. Barstad, ‘*HBL* als Bezeichnung der fremden Götter im Alten Testament und der Gott Hubal’, *StudTheol* 32 (1978), 57-65; H. M. Barstad, *The Religious Polemics of Amos* (VT Sup 34), Leiden 1984, 70-72.

- 16 a They had abandoned all the commands of YHWH, their God.  
 b They had made for themselves a molten image <<two calves>><sup>13</sup>.  
 c They had made a pole for Asherah.  
 d They had bowed down to all the host of heaven.  
 e They had worshiped Baal.
- 17 a They made pass their sons and daughters through the fire.  
 b They had practised divination and sorcery.<sup>14</sup>  
 c They had let themselves seduce to do evil in the eyes of YHWH  
 d to offend him.
- 18 a YHWH became very angry with Israel.  
 b He removed from before his face.  
 c Nothing remained except the tribe of Judah.
- 19 a Judah, too, did not keep the commands of YHWH, their God.  
 b They walked in the statutes,  
 c that Israel had made.
- 20 a YHWH spurned all the seed of Israel.  
 b He chastened them  
 c and gave them in the hand of plunderers,  
 d until he threw them away from before his face.

## 2.2. Remarks on the composition of the textual unit

This extensive textual unit shows a coherent and concentric structure:

- A 7 Introduction; the sin of the people in contrast to the favour of God  
 B 8-12 Reproaches on the people  
 C 13 Warning through the prophets  
 B' 14-17 More reproaches  
 D 18-20 God's favour has changed into wrath and punishment.

<sup>13</sup> The words *šēnê 'eglîm* are traditionally construed as a gloss, e.g. by B. Stade, 'Anmerkungen zu 2 Kö. 15-21', *ZAW* 6 (1886), 166; W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972, 44 n. 89; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 392 n. 11; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 205. In my view the expression should, like the words *הַמַּסָּחָה גִּדְלָה* in 2 Kgs. 17:21, be interpreted as additions by the final redactor of the literary complex Gen. 2:1–2 Kgs. 25:30. The aim of these addition is most probably to point out greater connections within the history of Israel in this case the story of the 'Golden Calf' and the installation by Jeroboam I of the calf images.

<sup>14</sup> For a discussion of various kinds of divination in ancient Israel, see F. H. Cryer, *Divination in Ancient Israel and its Near Eastern Environment: A socio-historical Investigation* (JSOT Sup 142), Sheffield 1994; A. Jeffers, *Divination in Ancient Palestine and Syria* (SHCANE 8), Leiden 1996; C. van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: A Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel*, Winona Lake 1997.

Eynikel has criticized this idea.<sup>15</sup> His main point of criticism is related to the fact that vv. 7 and 18 show no similarity. Against this it should be noted that the textual unit under consideration is not a poetic text, in which similarity between the first and the last element in a concentric symmetry is to be expected, but an argument in the form of a narrative. Narratives as such relate changes.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, evidently the correlation between the elements A and D is that of a shift: God changing from 'favour' to 'wrath'. Despite the clear composition of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20<sup>17</sup>, a literary-critical or redaction-historical division is frequently made between the core of the text and the final remarks in which Judah is mentioned.<sup>18</sup> In my view, 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20 were written by the same hand. Three observations may support this supposition:

1. There are connections on the level of vocabulary.
2. There is no contradiction between 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20 as for the addressed person(s).
3. The reproaches in B and B' are paralleled in the Book of Kings by deeds of kings and people of both Judah and Israel.

The first two features will be discussed shortly. The third one will be addressed in the next section.

<sup>15</sup> E. Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS, 33), Leiden 1996, 89-94.

<sup>16</sup> See on this e.g. S. Rimon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London 1983; M. Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, Toronto-Buffalo-London 1985.

<sup>17</sup> See also L. Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (JSOT Sup 84), Sheffield 1989, 205-16; S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 140-42; J. Zsengeller, *Gerizim as Israel: Northern Traditions of the Old Testament and the Early History of the Samaritans* (Utrechtse Theologische Reeks 38), Utrecht 1998, 102.

<sup>18</sup> See e.g. J. Debus, *Die Sünde Jerobeams* (FRLANT 93), Göttingen 1967, 98-101; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 42-46; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge 1973, 274-89; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981, 55-63; H. Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129), Göttingen 1982, 45 n. 28; Würthwein, *Könige*, 391-2, 395-97; Cogan, *Tadmor, II Kings*, 207; I. W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 172), Berlin-New York 1988, 71-73; M. A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1989, 209-11; C. Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: Gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (ThB 87), Gütersloh 1994, 108; M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, London-New York 1995, 114, 117-28; Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*.

## 2.2.1 Vocabulary connections

Connections on the level of vocabulary between 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 17:19-20:

- The phrase *šmr mšwt* occurs in the prophetic summons in element C (17:13) and in the observation that Judah too “did not keep the commands of YHWH” (17:19). According to Weinfeld, the phrase is specifically deuteronomistic.<sup>19</sup>
- The combination *hlk bhqwt*, ‘to follow the statutes’, only occurs in the Old Testament in 2 Kgs. 17:8 and 19. In DtrH the verb *hlk*, ‘to walk; to follow’, is attested in a variety of phrases, *hlk ’hry yhwh*, for example. The noun *hqwt*, ‘statutes’, is in deuteronomic and deuteronomistic language connected with the verb *šmr*, ‘to keep’.<sup>20</sup> *hlk bhqwt*, ‘to follow the statutes’, in 2 Kgs. 17 is a unique combination of words. Moreover, it is the only instance in DtrH, except *hqwt dwyd*, ‘the statutes of David’, where *hqwt* does not refer to provisions given by YHWH.<sup>21</sup> Here, the noun refers to the customs of the nations taken over by Israel (8) and, later, by Judah.
- The verb *m’s*, ‘to spurn’, occurs in 2 Kgs. 17:15 as well as in 2 Kgs. 17:20. Here the linguistic relations are also of a conceptual character: the spurning by Israel of God’s commands provoked God’s spurning of Israel. This hints at a concept of divine retribution in history.<sup>22</sup> Both clauses in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 presume each other and should best be regarded as stemming from the same hand.<sup>23</sup>
- The subordinate clause *’šr ’sh* is attested in 2 Kgs. 17:8 and 19. In both clauses, the verb *’sh* has the specific meaning ‘to install’.
- These four examples<sup>24</sup> show a relation on the level of vocabulary between 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20. This is not a definite proof of the fact that they were written by the same hand, since a later redactor could have imitated the language of a given tradition. When, however, relations on other levels could be detected, then the thesis of common authorship would stand more firmly.

<sup>19</sup> M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, 336.

<sup>20</sup> See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 336.

<sup>21</sup> Comparable language is attested in the Holiness code as has been indicated by Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> See also J. van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, New Haven-London 1983, 260; F.I. Andersen, D.N. Freedman, *Amos* (AB 24), New York 1989, 296; E. Bons, ‘Das Denotat von כִּזְבִּיהֶם “ihre Lügen” im Judaspruch Am 2,4-5’, *ZAW* 108 (1996) 206-07.

<sup>23</sup> With Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur*, 45 n. 28 (both DtrN); *pace* Dietrich, *Prophezie*, 42-46 (15: DtrN; 20: DtrP).

<sup>24</sup> The apposition *’lohêhem*, ‘their God’, occurring in 2 Kgs. 17:9.14.16 and repeated in 2 Kgs. 17:19 is too general an expression to be taken as a signifying redactional seam.

## 2.2.2. 'and Judah'

The mention of 'and Judah' in 2 Kgs. 17:13 will now be discussed. There seems to be a contradiction between 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20. The last two verses are directed against Judah. 7-18 seems only to refer to the Northern Kingdom. For several scholars this contradiction is an argument for a literary-critical deconstruction.<sup>25</sup> This contradiction is only more apparent than real, I think. The prophetic warning (17:13) is also directed against Judah. Coherent with the view that 18-19 form a later intrusion, the morpheme *ûbîhûdā*, 'and Judah', has been construed as a later gloss. The reading of MT, however, is supported by all the ancient versions. Therefore, it seems plausible to construe *ûbîhûdā*, 'and Judah', as part of the original text. To apply meaning to the textual unit, one has to accept that the author of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 is referring to Israel and Judah alike and that the ruination of both Samaria and Jerusalem is assessed in the textual unit under consideration. This implies that in 7-20 the history of kings and prophets, of guilt and exile of "all the seed of Israel" (17:20) is narrated.<sup>26</sup>

## 3. Context and co-text

Before reading a textual unit in its context, one should consider its co-text. Reading is primarily, though not exclusively, a language related enterprise. This means that the interpretation of a text should first consider the complete, and sometimes complex, literary context. Exegetes should distinguish co-text, an idea indicating the literary 'context', from context, an idea indicating *all* relations, linguistic, cultural, societal, religious, political etc. that can help in the process of understanding and interpreting a textual unit.<sup>27</sup> The co-text of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 is primarily the Book of Kings. In the textual elements B and B' Israel is reproached for its guilty and sinful conduct. With the idea in mind that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 refers to both the Northern Kingdom and to Judah, I would like to read these reproaches in their co-text. My question is: Are there any parallels between the reproaches in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 and the narratives on and/or assessments of the kings of Israel and Judah

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g. Debus, *Jeroboam*, 98-101; Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 274-98; R. E. Friedman, 'From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr1 and Dtr2', in: B. Halpern, J. D. Levenson (eds.), *Traditions in Transformation* (FS F.M. Cross), Winona Lake 1981, 167-92; R. E. Friedman, *The Exile and Biblical Narrative: The Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (HSM 22), Chico 1981, 1-43; Würthwein, *Könige*, 391-97; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 207; Brettler, *Creation of History*, 120.

<sup>26</sup> Note that in Jer. 31:37 the same expression, *kl zr' ysr'l*, occurs and that there too the expression aims at Israel and Judah alike.

<sup>27</sup> On this distinction see A. Goldberg, 'Zitat und Citem', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 6 (1978) 23-6.



in the Book of Kings?<sup>28</sup> Others have pointed at the fact that some reproaches in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 would refer to situations that have occurred after the ruination of Samaria.<sup>29</sup> I have two remarks on this point. (1) The observations have not been made systematically and (2) They have been made in a more ‘historical’ approach to the text. Eslinger has pursued a more ‘literary’ approach to this feature. He, however, has confined the comparison to the narrative up to 2 Kgs. 17 and did not look for parallels in the rest of the Book of Kings. Eslinger’s approach is thus biased by the idea that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20(23) evaluates the conduct of Northern Israel.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, it seems fruitful to approach the reproaches in a linguistic and systematic way.

#### 4. A Comparison

– ירא אלהים אחרים, ‘to fear other gods’.

This is one of the deuteronomistic phrases for trespassing the command “You shall not have other gods before my face.” In the Book of Kings the phrase is attested as follows:

2 Kgs. 17:35	colonists	N(?)
2 Kgs. 17:37	colonists	N(?)
2 Kgs. 17:38	colonists	N(?)

– הלך בחקות הגוים, ‘to walk after the statutes of the nations’

An explicit prohibition to ‘walk in the statutes of the nations’ is formulated in the Holiness Code.<sup>31</sup> In the Book of Kings this formulation of the command is not attested.

– חפא דברים, ‘to do hidden things’

The verb חפא is a *hapax legomenon* and has, by implication, no parallels.

– בנה במות, ‘to build “high-places”’

The building of these kind of sanctuaries is phrased with the verb בנה several times in the Book of Kings:

<sup>28</sup> The comparison is confined to the Book of Kings, since that is the primary Canonical context. A comparison with stories in the Deuteronomistic History writing might be fruitful too, but such an enterprise implies a scholarly construct as the basis of analysis and not an actual text.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. by Stade, ‘Anmerkungen’, 164; H. A. Brongers, *II Koningen* (POT), Nijkerk 1970, 166; Debus, *Jerobeam*, 99; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 183-220.

<sup>31</sup> Lev. 18:3; 20:23.

1 Kgs. 11:7	Solomon	–
1 Kgs. 14:23	Judahites	S
2 Kgs. 17:9	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:3	Manasseh	S
2 Kgs. 23:13	Solomon (in flashback)	–

See also Jer. 7:31; 19:5; 32:35. In the Old Testament the comparable phrase עשה במזבח, ‘to make a “high-place”’, is attested at 2 Kgs. 23:15<sup>32</sup>; 2 Chron. 21:11; 28:11 and Ezek. 16:16.

– נצב מצבות, ‘to set up pillars’

This expression is not characteristically deuteronomistic. In the Book of Kings the ‘erecting or making of pillars’ is nowhere else phrased with the verb נצב:

– נצב אֲשֵׁרִים, ‘to set up sacred poles’

The verb נצב has nowhere in the Book of Kings אֲשֵׁרִים as its object.

– קטר בבמות, ‘to offer in/at “high places”’

The verb קטר is used in Classical Hebrew to describe the burning or melting of offerings. The verb in itself is ideologically neutral. From the context it must be concluded whether the offering is ‘good’ or ‘bad’, i.e. a correctly conducted offer for YHWH.<sup>33</sup> The Book of Kings reproaches Judahite kings for bringing offerings in “high-place” sanctuaries:

1 Kgs. 3:3	Solomon	–
1 Kgs. 22:44	Joshaphat	S
2 Kgs. 12:4	Joash	S
2 Kgs. 14:4	Amaziah	S
2 Kgs. 15:4	Azarjah	S
2 Kgs. 15:25	Jotham	S
2 Kgs. 17:11	–	–
2 Kgs. 23:5.8	Kings of Judah	S

In 2 Kgs. 16:4 it is related about Ahaz that he offered in a *bamôt* sanctuary, although there the verb זבח is used for ‘to offer’. Manasseh rebuilt the *bamāh* sanctuary torn down by Hezekiah. Offerings by Manasseh are, however, not narrated.

– עשה דברים רעים, ‘to do evil things’

This expression is not attested elsewhere in the Book of Kings.

<sup>32</sup> Jeroboam I in a flashback.

<sup>33</sup> See Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 57-58; HALAT, 1022-23.

– הכעס את־יהוה, ‘to offend YHWH’

The offending of YHWH by Israelites/Judahites is phrased in Dt, DtrH and in the Book of Jeremiah with the verb כעס Hiph.<sup>34</sup> As a rule the entity with which YHWH is offended is mentioned:

1 Kgs. 14:1	Jeroboam I	molten images	N
1 Kgs. 14:15	Jeroboam I	sacred poles	N
1 Kgs. 15:30	Nadab	sins of Jeroboam	N
1 Kgs. 16:2	Baasha	sins of Jeroboam	N
1 Kgs. 16:7	Baasha	(general)	N
1 Kgs. 16:13	Ela	vanities	N
1 Kgs. 16:26	Omri	sins of Jeroboam	N
1 Kgs. 16:33	Ahab	cult of Baal	N
1 Kgs. 21:22	Ahab	cult of Baal (general)	N
1 Kgs. 22:54	Ahaziah	cult of Baal	N
2 Kgs. 17:11	–	evil things	–
2 Kgs. 17:17	–	Molekh/soothsaying	–
2 Kgs. 21:6	Manasseh	Molekh/soothsaying	S
2 Kgs. 21:15	Judah	(general)	S
2 Kgs. 22:17	Judahites	all their practices	S
2 Kgs. 23:19	Israelites (in flashback)	shrines	N

– עבד הגללים, ‘to worship idols’

The *gillûlîm*, ‘idols’<sup>35</sup>, are mentioned several times in the Book of Kings: 1 Kgs. 15:12; 21:26; 2 Kgs. 21:11; 23:24. The phrase under consideration is attested only twice:

2 Kgs. 17:12	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:21	Amon	S

– לא שמע, ‘not listen; to disobey’

Weinfeld, in his monograph on deuteronomistic language, does not discuss this phrase.<sup>36</sup> According to Nelson, the phrase with its general formulation is a characteristic of the exilic redaction.<sup>37</sup> The expression occurs in the following texts. The outline indicates also the object of the disobedience:

<sup>34</sup> See Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 340-41.

<sup>35</sup> On this generic term see M. I. Gruber, ‘Gillulim’, in: *DDD*, 346-47.

<sup>36</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*.

<sup>37</sup> Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 51, 53-55.

1 Kgs. 12:13.16	Jeroboam I	to the people	N
1 Kgs. 20:36	Ahab	God's voice	N
2 Kgs. 14:11	Amaziah	Joash of Israel	N
2 Kgs. 17:14	–	God's command	–
2 Kgs. 17:40	colonists	God's command	N(?)
2 Kgs. 18:12	Israelites	God's voice	N
2 Kgs. 18:12	Israelites	God's command	N
2 Kgs. 21:9	Judahites	God's command	S
2 Kgs. 22:13	the ancestors	contents of law code	– (N+S?)

– קשה את־ערפי, 'to be obstinate'

This expression, characterized by Weinfeld as deuteronomistic<sup>38</sup>, attested in the Book of Jeremiah<sup>39</sup> and in post exilic-literature<sup>40</sup>, is elsewhere unattested in the Book of Kings.

– לא האמין ביהוה, 'do not believe in YHWH'

This generally phrased expression is attested in the Book of Kings only at 2 Kgs. 17:14.

– מאס את־חקיו ..., 'to spurn his statutes etc.'

This reproach has no parallel in the Book of Kings.

– הלך אחרי־ההבל, 'to walk after the emptiness'

The expression occurs in the same wording at Jer. 2:5. Generally the view is accepted that the author of the Book of Kings has taken over the expression from Jeremiah or Jeremian traditions.<sup>41</sup> The main argument for this view is that, in all probability, Jeremiah should be seen as the author of the conceited equation 'other gods' = הבלים, 'emptinesses'.<sup>42</sup> In the Book of Kings the expression under consideration is further absent, although 1 Kgs. 16:13.26 narrate that Ela, Baasha and Omri had offended YHWH with the הבלים.

<sup>38</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 241.

<sup>39</sup> Jer. 7:26; 17:23; 19:15.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Neh. 9:16.17.29 and Prov. 29:1.

<sup>41</sup> See e.g. Stade, 'Anmerkungen', 164-65; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 323; H. Weippert, *Die Prosareden des Jeremiabuches* (BZAW 132), Berlin-New York 1973, 218; A. van Selms, *Jeremia I* (POT), Nijkerk 1972, 229; Würthwein, *Könige*, 392; W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah I* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1986, 86. For other views see: W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 1–25* (WMANT 41), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1973, 80-1; S. Herrmann, *Jeremia* (BK 12/1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1990, 119.

<sup>42</sup> See Jer. 10:3.8.15; 14:22; 51:18.

– הלך אחרי ... הגוים אשר סביבתם, ‘to go after the surrounding nations’  
This expression hinting at the taking over of religious and cultic customs of other nations occurs in the Book of Kings only at 2 Kgs. 17:15.

– עזב את־כל־מצות יהוה, ‘to abandon all the commands of YHWH’  
This expression, construed by Veijola as a characteristic of the nomistic redaction of DtrH<sup>43</sup>. In the Book of Kings the expression occurs at the following instances:

1 Kgs. 9:9	announcement of possible doom in case Solomon or his sons would abandon Yhwh	–
1 Kgs. 18:18	doom over Israel since Ahab abandoned God’s command	N
1 Kgs. 19:10.14	Israelites had abandoned the covenant with God	N
2 Kgs. 17:16	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:22	Amon abandoned YHWH	S
2 Kgs. 22:17	Judahites abandoned YHWH	S

– עשה מסכה, ‘to make a molten image’  
This expression occurs only twice in the Book of Kings:

1 Kgs. 14:9	Prophecy of Ahiah against Jeroboam	N
2 Kgs. 17:16	–	–

– עשה אשרה, ‘to make an Asherah/a pole’  
Above the construction נצב אשרה has been discussed. The expression עשה אשרה can be found at:

1 Kgs. 14:5	Israelites	N
1 Kgs. 16:33	Ahab	N
2 Kgs. 17:16	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:3	Manasseh	S

It should be noted that 1 Kgs. 14:23 narrates that in Judah an ‘Asherah’ has been built (בנה אשרה).

– השתחוה לכל־צבא השמים, ‘to bow down to all the host of heaven’  
This deuteronomistic phrase is attested only twice in the Book of Kings:

<sup>43</sup> T. Veijola, *Das Königtum in der Beurteilung der deuteronomistischen Historiographie: Eine Redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (AASF.B 198), Helsinki 1977, 56-57.

2 Kgs. 17:16	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:3	Manasseh	S

A parallel expression is found in 2 Kgs. 21:5 where it is related that Manasseh built altars for the entire heavenly host. Josiah abandoned the idolatrous priests who had been installed to bring offerings to the ‘sun, the moon, the constellations and all of the heavenly host’ (2 Kgs. 23:5).

– עבד את־בעל, ‘to worship Baal’

The veneration of the Baal<sup>44</sup>, with Baal in the singular, is mentioned a few times in the Book of Kings:

1 Kgs. 16:31	Ahab	N
1 Kgs. 22:54	Ahaziah	N
2 Kgs. 10:18	Ahab (flashback)	N
2 Kgs. 17:16	–	–

– העביר את־בנים ... בעש, ‘to make children pass through the fire’

This purification rite<sup>45</sup> is, phrased this way, mentioned four times in the Book of Kings:

2 Kgs. 16:3	Ahaz	S
2 Kgs. 17:17	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:6	Manasseh	S
2 Kgs. 23:10	Judahites	S

– קסם, ‘to practice divination’

2 Kgs. 17:17 is the only instance in the Book of Kings where divination by means of oracles is mentioned. In 2 Kgs. 21:6, a verse that shares features with 2 Kgs. 17:17<sup>46</sup>, the verb קסם does not occur.

<sup>44</sup> I will not enter in the discussion of whether the noun בעל refers to a Canaanite deity, known also from the Ugaritic texts, or is a depreciating term for a non-deuteronomistic veneration of YHWH.

<sup>45</sup> See on this e.g. G. C. Heider, *The Cult of Molek: A Reassessment* (JSOT Sup 43), Sheffield 1985, esp. 254; J. Day, *Molech: A god of human sacrifice in the Old Testament* (UCOP 41), Cambridge 1989, 65-71.

<sup>46</sup> On the relation with 2 Kgs. 21:6 see Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 45; E. Ben Zvi, ‘The Account of the Reign of Manasseh in II Reg 21,1-18 and the Redactional History of the Book of Kings’, *ZAW* 103 (1991), 363; B. Halpern, D. S. Vanderhooft, ‘The Editions of Kings in the 7th-6th Centuries B.C.E.’, *HUCA* 62 (1991), 240-41; K. A. D. Smelik, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OTS 28), Leiden 1992, 148; Brettler, *Creation of History*, 123; W. M. Schniedewind, ‘History and Interpretation: The Religion of Ahab and Manasseh in the Book of Kings’, *CBQ* 55 (1993), 649-61; P. S. F. van Keulen, *Manasseh through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists: The Manasseh Account (2 Kings 21:1-18) and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 38), Leiden 1996, 98-103.

– נחש, ‘to practice sorcery’

The verb נחש occurs three times in the Book of Kings. 1 Kgs. 20:33, however, cannot be considered a parallel for the reproach in 2 Kgs. 17:17. since in this probably pre-dtr report on a battle near Aphek the verb נחש Pi. means ‘to consider as a good omen’.

2 Kgs. 17:17	–	–
2 Kgs. 21:6	Manasseh	S

– התמכר לעשות הרע, ‘to let seduce to do evil’

This expression is attested three times in the Book of Kings:

1 Kgs. 21:20.25	Ahab	N
2 Kgs. 17:17	–	–

Summarizing the evidence, a preliminary conclusion can be drawn. It appears that the parallels in the Book of Kings for the reproaches in 2 Kgs. 17:7-12.14-17 are equally distributed over representatives of the Northern and the Southern Kingdom:

N	24 times
S	22 times
Solomon	4 times
colonists	4 times

These observations underscore the surmise uttered above that the literary unit 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 is addressed to both Israel and Judah. In case only parallels with kings and representatives of the Northern Kingdom were found, this view would have been less probable. The observations, moreover, underscore Noth’s view on the character of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 as an exilic text assessing both Israelite and Judahite conduct.<sup>47</sup>

### 5. Historiographic implications

The Book of Kings narrates the story of Israel between David and Gedaliah, or to say the same in other words: from before the building of the temple until after the destruction of the temple. Its authors should be seen as historians. This does, however, not imply that they are presenting a reconstruction of what really happened, although it should be presumed that they believed that their story related what really happened. The history-writing

<sup>47</sup> Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 85. Brettler, *Creation of History*, 121-22, supposes that 2 Kgs. 17:7-12 are a “misplaced fragment of a speech which justified the exile of Judah”.

of the authors of the Book of Kings, however, has taken the form of a narrative, it is an organization of the past and not a mere description of it. It is apparent that they have collected and selected events known to them, either orally or written, and that they moulded their material into the form now known to us. In doing so they have been steered by a certain belief system meanwhile trying to persuade their readers of the validity of that belief system.<sup>48</sup> 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 is one of the units in the Book of Kings where this belief system becomes apparent. The comparison of the reproaches has made clear that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 can be seen as an authoritative interpretation of the narrative in the Book of Kings. Therefore, the elements of the belief system as reflected in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 will now be summarized.

It is important to observe that the textual unit presents a contrast between God and the people. There is a contrast between the goodness of God and the sins of the people, as has been observed by Pauline Viviano.<sup>49</sup> This contrast is already observable in 2 Kgs. 17:7-8. Over against God's acting in history on behalf of his people – at the Exodus out of Egypt (7) and at the entrance into the land (8) – stands the guilt of the people. Both themes are elaborated in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20. The guilt of the people is made explicit in the reproaches in vv. 8-12; 14-17 and 19, while the goodness of God, as a result of or a reaction to the guilt of the people has changed into a warning and eventually punishing position. The textual unit reflects the belief that the love of God was changed into anger and punishment as his *final* answer to the sins of the people. Although the word is not used, the text can be seen as an expression of the confession that YHWH is *'erek 'appayîm*, "long suffering", since YHWH did not immediately punish his people, but first warned them through his prophets.

The comparison of the reproaches, present in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20, pursued above, not only made clear that this textual unit assesses the conduct of Israelites and Judahites alike, but also that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 can be seen as central text when searching for the historiography of the Book of Kings. This implies that the belief system, sketched above in a few lines, also forms the backbone of the historiography in the entire Book of Kings. In other words, the idea of God changing from 'goodness' to 'warning' to 'punishment' as a reaction to the conduct of the people must be seen as the idea by which the selection of data, events and traditions was made by the authors of the Book of Kings. This implies that the Book of Kings, as it now stands, reflects an ideology and is not narrating pure facts. This view, however, does not imply that all the events in the Book of Kings are pure fiction. Since certain events are also reflected in cuneiform texts and others are hinted at

<sup>48</sup> On the concept 'belief system' see, e.g., M. B. Black, 'Belief Systems', in: J. J. Honigmann (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago 1973, 509-77.

<sup>49</sup> P. A. Viviano, '2 Kings 17: A Rhetorical and Form-Critical Analysis', *CBQ* 49 (1987), 550.



in West Semitic inscriptions, there is a great plausibility that events like the conquest of Samaria by Shalmaneser V and Sargon II<sup>50</sup>, the campaign of Sennacherib and others really have happened.<sup>51</sup> Many other events, and strings of events, narrated in the Book of Kings are not reflected in the extra biblical material so far. Some events are supposed to have been referred to in West Semitic inscriptions, but their reference is heavily debated.<sup>52</sup>

In sum, we should read the Book of Kings neither naively biblicistically, nor purely in an enlightened way<sup>53</sup> but as a biased narrative whose author(s) had selected and modified events from the past in order to convince a readership of the reasons why God's people had made a move from 'Exodus' to 'Exile'.

<sup>50</sup> See on this string of events: B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (SHANE 2), Leiden 1992.

<sup>51</sup> The list is well known, see on them, e.g., Ph. R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOT Sup 148), Sheffield 1995, 57-71; L. L. Grabbe, 'Are Historians of Ancient Palestine Fellow Creatures – or Different Animals?', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 24-26.

<sup>52</sup> I would like to give two recent examples.

(1) A. Biran, J. Naveh, 'The Tel Dan Inscription: A New Fragment', *IEJ* 45 (1995) 1-18, have argued that extensive historical conclusions can be drawn from their joining of the Danite inscriptions. The text would contain the names of the Israelite king [Jeho]ram and his Judahite counterpart [Ahaz]jah. In the view of the editors the 'I'-character in the inscription should be interpreted as referring to the Damascene king Hazael who had killed the kings Jehoram and Ahazjah. This, however, is contrary to the tradition attested at 2 Kgs. 9:16-19 where Jehu is seen as the one who executed the end of the house of Omri proclaimed by Elijah (1 Kgs. 19:17) and Elisha (2 Kgs. 9:6-10). Biran and Naveh suggest that - on the level of historical reconstruction - Hazael would have used Jehu as an agent. In case their interpretation is correct, unexpected light would fall on a hitherto relatively dark period in the history of Israel. The possibility of the proposed join is, however, heavily debated; see B. Becking, 'The Second Danite Inscription: Some Remarks', *BN* 81 (1996), 21-30.

(2) P. R. Davies, J. W. Rogerson, 'Was the Siloam Tunnel Built by Hezekiah?', *BA* 59 (1996), 138-49, have proposed - against the scholarly consensus - that the Siloam inscription should be dated in the Hasmonean period and that, by implication, the report on Hezekiah's hydrological building activities (2 Kgs. 20:20) should be regarded as fiction. S. Norin, 'The age of the Siloam inscription and Hezekiah's tunnel', *VT* 48 (1998), 37-48, however, has correctly and convincingly questioned their argument.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. the assessment of Dietrich, 'Martin Noth and the Future of the Deuteronomistic History', 153.

## Chapter VII: From Apostasy to Destruction – 2 Kings 17:21-23: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria<sup>\*</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Among the many things Old Testament scholarship owes to Chris Brekelmans are his insights in proto-deuteronomistic material both in the Pentateuch<sup>1</sup> and in the so-called Deuteronomistic History writing.<sup>2</sup> Here he claimed, with sound argument, that material going back to Hezekian and Josianic times was incorporated in the text-corpora mentioned. In this paper I would like to continue this line of thought with some observations on the textual unit 2 Kgs. 17:21-23.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. The fall of Samaria

After a three-year siege, Samaria – the capital of the so-called Northern Kingdom – was captured by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser V in 723 BCE. A part of the population was carried away into exile to Assyria. The remaining population was enticed to participate into the anti-Assyrian coalition under the leadership of Ilu-bi'di, king of Hamath in Syria. This revolt was put down by the new king of Assyria, Sargon II, in 720 BCE. That event turned out to be the final curtain for the Northern Empire as an independent state. Sargon II incorporated the territory as the province Samerina into his empire. Assyrian colonists were settled in the area.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup> Originally published as: B. Becking, 'From Apostasy to Destruction: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria', in: M. Vervenne, J. Lust (eds.), *Deuteronomy and Deuteronomistic Literature: Festschrift C. H. W. Brekelmans* (BETHL 133), Leuven 1997, 279-97.

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., C. H. W. Brekelmans, 'Éléments deutéronomiques dans le Pentateuque', *Recherches Bibliques* 8 (1967), 77-91; C. H. W. Brekelmans, 'Die sogenannten deuteronomistischen Elemente in Genesis bis Numeri', in: *Volume du Congrès Genève 1965* (VT Sup 15), Leiden 1966, 90-96.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., C.H.W. Brekelmans, 'Joshua xxiv', in: J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume. Leuven 1989* (VT Sup 43), Leiden 1991, 1-9.

<sup>3</sup> By doing so, I am elaborating some views from previous publications in Dutch: B. Becking, 'Theologie na de ondergang. Enkele opmerkingen bij 2 Koningen 17', *Bijdragen* 49 (1988), 150-74; B. Becking, 'Van afval tot ondergang. Een Josiaanse visie op de ondergang van Samaria (2 Koningen 17:21-23)', *Acta Theologica* 10 (1990), 1-14.

<sup>4</sup> For sources relating to the events mentioned and the scholarly discussion see B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria* (SHANE 2), Leiden 1992; R. Lamprichs, *Die Westexpansion des*

Within the framework of the political and economic relations in the eighth century BCE, the fall of Samaria can be understood as the result of a historic process. From the point of view of the *longue durée* the event as such was inevitable. The Assyrian kings, with their high officials, pursued an expansionistic policy which had its own inherent logic. The vast army and the growing population in the cities of the Assyrian homeland needed more and more raw-materials and articles of food. The king was in need of luxury articles to satisfy the wants of his court. The yearly tributes from the conquered areas can be seen as the economic basis of these various needs. In the case of Samaria, the Assyrian advance was enhanced by the internal strife of the Northern Kingdom.

The authors of the Book of Kings wanted to evaluate the event from a different perspective. A reading of the Book of Kings as a whole makes clear that its authors were not primarily interested in matters of politics or economy. Their main interests are of a theological kind. They were writing history to give an explanation for Israel's being in exile, so that the people could cope with the reality they had to meet. The question these writers are willing to answer is as follows: How can it be possible that Israel, despite the love of God, despite the Exodus out of Egypt, despite the giving of the promised land, the Davidic dynasty and the Solomonic temple, had to leave their country to live in exile? Part of the answer is given in 2 Kgs. 17:21-23.

### 3. Theological evaluations

#### 3.1. 2 Kings 17:21-23

2 Kgs. 17:21-23 is a text that evaluates the fall of Samaria. This is not the only textual unit in the Book of Kings that assesses the event mentioned. This plurality of assessments should be related to the scholarly insight that the Book of Kings, as part of the greater work depicted as the Deuteronomistic History, went through a complicated redactional process. At least two, most probably three redactional layers can be detected.<sup>5</sup> Some scholars think of even more redactions.<sup>6</sup> I will not yet align myself with to any of

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*neuassyrischen Reiches: Eine Strukturanalyse* (AOAT 239), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1995, esp. 130-33.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981; A. D. H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel between Settlement and Exile*, London 1983; H. Weippert, 'Das deuteronomistische Geschichtswerk. Sein Ziel und Ende in der neueren Forschung', *ThR* 50 (1985), 213-49; G. N. Knoppers, *Two Nations under God: The Deuteronomistic History of Solomon and the Dual Monarchies* 2 Vols., Atlanta 1993-94.

<sup>6</sup> I refer to the so-called Smend school initiated by W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972.

these redaction theories, but first isolate the several textual units that assess the fall of Samaria.

### 3.2. 2 Kings 18:12

2 Kgs. 18:12 is an insertion in the report on the reign of the Judaeen king Hezekiah. The author of this evaluative note interprets the fall of Samaria as the result of disobedience and breach of the covenant:

... for they had not obeyed YHWH, their God; they violated the covenant; all that Moses, the servant of YHWH, had commanded. They would not obey and they would not behave.

Remarkably the event is related to the Mosaic covenant. The sins of the people are not specifically mentioned: They had violated all of the stipulations of the covenant. The dating of this verse is not an easy task. Exegetes reckoning with a simple redaction of DtrH consider 2 Kgs. 18:12 as an exilic insertion.<sup>7</sup> In the so-called Cross school, the verse is seen as part of the Josianic redaction labeled Dtr1.<sup>8</sup> This view is, however, problematic since the idea of a contrast between the North and the South, which is characteristic for Dtr1 according Cross and others, is absent in this verse. Advocates of the views of Smend allot 2 Kgs. 18:12 to the post-exilic DtrN in view of the reference to the Mosaic covenant.<sup>9</sup> The language in 2 Kgs. 18:12 is not specifically deuteronomistic. This remark does not prove very much since this is only a small textual unit. The relations with pre-exilic literature of the expressions (*lo'*) *šāma' b<sup>e</sup>qol yhw<sup>e</sup>* and *'ābar b<sup>e</sup>rīt*,<sup>10</sup> however, open the possibility of a pre-exilic date.<sup>11</sup>

### 3.3. 2 Kings 17:7-20

In the short text just discussed, the contours of the deuteronomistic evaluation in 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 are already detectable. This more extensive textual unit shows a coherent structure:

<sup>7</sup> E.g., H. A. Brongers, *II Koningen* (POT), Nijkerk 1970, 178.

<sup>8</sup> Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 62; Mayes, *Story of Israel*, 171 n. 18.

<sup>9</sup> Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 138 n. 115; H. Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129), Göttingen 1982, 174 n. 35; E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: I. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD, 11,1), Göttingen 1984, 410.

<sup>10</sup> See J. Bright, 'The Date of the Prose Sermons in Jeremiah', *JBL* 70 (1951), Appendix n. 4; M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, 337.

<sup>11</sup> See also E. Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah and the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (OTS 33), Leiden 1996, 93-94.

- A 7 Introduction; the sin of the people in contrast to the favour of God
- B 8-12 Reproaches on the people
- C 13 Warning through the prophets
- B' 14-17 More reproaches
- D 18-20 God's favour has changed into wrath and punishment.

Eynikel has criticized this idea.<sup>12</sup> His main point of criticism is related to the fact that vv. 7 and 18 show no similarity. Against this it should be noted that the textual unit under consideration is not a poetic text, in which similarity between the first and the last element in a concentric symmetry is to be expected, but an argument in the form of a narrative. Narratives as such relate changes.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, it seems obvious that the correlation between A and D is that of a shift: God changing from 'favour' to 'wrath'. Despite the clear composition of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20<sup>14</sup>, a literary-critical or redaction-historical division is frequently made between the core of the text and the final remarks in which Judah is mentioned.<sup>15</sup> In my view, 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20 were written by the same hand. Three observations may support this supposition:

1. There are connections on the level of vocabulary.<sup>16</sup>
2. There seems to be a contradiction between 2 Kgs. 17:7-18 and 19-20. The last two verses are directed against Judah. 7-18 seems only to refer to the Northern Kingdom. This contradiction is only more apparent than real, I think. The prophetic warning is also directed against Judah (17:13).

<sup>12</sup> Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*, 89-94.

<sup>13</sup> See on this S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, London 1983.

<sup>14</sup> See also L. Eslinger, *Into the Hands of the Living God* (JSOT Sup 84), Sheffield 1989, 205-16.

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. J. Debus, *Die Sünde Jerobeams* (FRLANT 93), Göttingen 1967, 98-101; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 42-46; Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur*, 45 n. 28; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge 1973, 274-289; Würthwein, *Könige*, 391-392, 395-397; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), Garden City 1988, 207; I. W. Provan, *Hezekiah and the Books of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate about the Composition of the Deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 172), Berlin-New York 1988, 71-73; M. A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1989, 209-211; C. Westermann, *Die Geschichtsbücher des Alten Testaments: Gab es ein deuteronomistisches Geschichtswerk?* (ThB 87), Gütersloh 1994, 108; Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*.

<sup>16</sup> The phrase *šmr mšwt* occurs in the prophetic summons in element C (17:13) and in the observation that Judah too "did not keep the commands of YHWH" (17:19). The combination *hlk bḥqwt*, 'to follow the statutes', only occurs in the Old Testament in 2 Kgs. 17:8 and 19. The verb *m's*, 'to spurn', occurs in 2 Kgs. 17:15 as well as in 2 Kgs. 17:20. Here the linguistic relations are also of a conceptual character: the spurning by Israel of God's commands provoked God's spurning of Israel. The subordinate clause *šr 'sh* is attested in 2 Kgs. 17:8 and 19.

3. The reproaches in B and B' are paralleled in the Book of Kings by deeds of kings and people of both Judah and Israel.<sup>17</sup>

This leads to the supposition that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 is a deuteronomistic homily on the fall of both the Northern and the Southern Kingdoms in Israel. As argued in the previous chapter, the textual unit reflects the belief that the love of God was changed into anger and punishment as his *final* answer to the sins of the people. Although the word is not used, the text can be seen as an expression of the confession that YHWH is 'erek 'appayîm, "long suffering", since YHWH did not immediately punish his people, but first warned them through his prophets.

### 3.4. The Book of Chronicles

The Book of Chronicles does not relate the destruction of Samaria, although 2 Chron. 5:26 incorrectly assigns the exile of Israelites to 'Halah, Habor, Hara and the river of Gozan' to Tiglath-Pileser III.<sup>18</sup>

### 3.5. 2 Esdras

According to 2 Esdras 13:39-45, the Israelites, taken captive by Shalmaneser, found refuge in Arzareth, 'a region where no human being had ever lived', which they reached by the narrow passages of the Euphrates. This 'Other Land', as Arzareth can be rendered (Hebr. ארץ אחרת), stands for the nether world, from which the dispersed Israelites would return at the end of time. This concept might be based on an interpretation of 2 Kgs. 17:6 // 18:11 in which the Habur river near Gozan, to which the Israelites were exiled, is interpreted as the Hubur, river of death.

## 4. 2 Kings 17:21-23: Text and grammar

### 4.1. Translation

The textual unit 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 can be translated as follows:

- 21 a When He tore away Israel from the House of David  
 b they had made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king.  
 c Jeroboam led Israel away from YHWH.  
 d He caused them to sin <...>.

<sup>17</sup> In a forthcoming article '2 Kings 17:7-20 in the Context of its Co-Text', I will demonstrate the parallels (see above Ch. 6).

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., J. M. Myers, *I Chronicles* (AB 12), Garden City 1965, 39.

- 22 a The Israelites went in all the sins,  
     b that Jeroboam had done.  
     c They did not deviate from that,  
 23 a until YHWH removed Israel from his face,  
     b as He had spoken through all his servants, the prophets.  
     c Israel went into exile from its land to Assyria until this day.

#### 4.2. Textual remarks

The text of this part of the Book of Kings is transmitted in good order. The ancient versions do not hint at a different text-tradition.

- 21 a *kî* here has a temporal force<sup>19</sup>; and is not to be seen as a causal particle.<sup>20</sup>  
     b God is to be seen as the implied subject of the verb *qr*‘.<sup>21</sup> From a grammatical point of view ‘Israel’ can also be construed as the subject of *qr*‘.<sup>22</sup> The fact that 2 Kgs. 17:21 refers to 1 Kgs. 11:1-10.30-31 supports the first interpretation. Moreover, LXX<sup>Luc</sup>, Vetus Latina, Targum and Vulgate render with a passive tense with God as implied subject.  
     c *wyd*‘ is construed as a Hiph. of the verb *nd*’//*ndh*, ‘to lead away (from)’<sup>23</sup> as is implied by the renderings of Targum and Peshitta.  
     d the uncommon vocalization *h<sup>a</sup>tā’āh* is attested in the expression ‘a great sin’ in Gen. 20:9; Exod. 32:21.30.31 and 2 Kgs. 17:21. Without the object, the clause in 2 Kgs. 17:21 is quite understandable. The somewhat overloaded phrase does not occur elsewhere in the Book of Kings, which implies that *h<sup>a</sup>t*‘ Hiph without an object is clear deuteronomistic speech. In my view the words were added by the final redactor of the complex Gen 1 – 2 Kgs. 25. The aim of this addition is most probably to point out greater connections within the history of Israel. Here the connection is made by the final editor: Golden Calf – Jeroboam I – destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

<sup>19</sup> See also A. Schoors, ‘The Particle *kî*’, *OTS* 21 (1981), 267-68; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 206. On this particle see now A. Aejmelaeus, ‘Function and Interpretation of כִּי in Biblical Hebrew’, *JBL* 105 (1986), 193-209.

<sup>20</sup> Pace e.g. Provan, *Hezekiah*, 71. His extensive literary-critical conclusions based on the supposed causal force of *kî* are not very convincing.

<sup>21</sup> See also J. Montgomery, H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh 1951, 460, 479-480; J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London<sup>3</sup> 1977, 650; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 41 n. 74; Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 216.

<sup>22</sup> Thus: Debus, *Sünde Jerobeams*, 97 n. 11; H. Weippert, ‘Die Ätiologie des Nordreiches und seiner Königshäuser (1 Reg 11:29-40)’, *ZAW* 95 (1983), 351.

<sup>23</sup> With, e.g., Gray, *I & II Kings*, 650; Debus, *Sünde Jerobeams*, 97 n. 12; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 204, 206.

- 22 c The suffix 3.f.s. in *mmnh* refers to a plural noun (*h̄t'wt*, 'sins'). This is a rare feature in Biblical Hebrew, but probably *h̄t'wt* is construed as a collective noun.

#### 4.3. Syntactical analysis

The textual unit can be construed as a narrative text. It consists mainly of a chain of *wayyiqtol* forms: *wymlykw* (21b) – *wyd'* (21c) – *wylkw* (22a) – *wygl* (23c). This chain is preceded by subordinative temporal clause (21a). Sometimes the chain is interrupted by (*w<sup>e</sup>qāṭal* forms. In 21d the *w<sup>e</sup>qāṭal*-form *whh̄ty'm* is to be seen as the description of the temporary end of the narrative chain. In 22b *'šr 'sh*, 'which he had done', indicates a subordinative clause. 22c, *l' srw mmnh*, is a part of the same narrative chain. The clause is to be interpreted as a narrative in inversion. Since the emphatic adverb *l'* is placed in the first position of the clause, the *wayyiqtol* form is inverted into a *qāṭal* form. 23a is a subordinate temporal clause which is dependent on 22d. 23b is a subordinate clause of the second order dependent on 23a. It is, in my view, characteristic of the Deuteronomists to use narrative forms as a vehicle for their assessments. To say the same in a different way: The narrative chain is not only used in the Old Testament to relate stories and events, but can also be used to relate views on history.

#### 5. Unity and composition

2 Kgs. 17:21-23 is an independent literary unit. This view has already been advocated by Benzinger<sup>24</sup>, Debus<sup>25</sup>, Steck<sup>26</sup>, Dietrich<sup>27</sup>, Cogan, Tadmor<sup>28</sup>, McKenzie,<sup>29</sup> and Eynikel.<sup>30</sup> It should be noted that other scholars hold different views. 2 Kgs. 17:7-23 has been taken as one large literary unit.<sup>31</sup> Literary critical subdivisions have been assumed for 2 Kgs. 17:21-23.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>24</sup> I. Benzinger, *Die Bücher der Könige* (KHCAT), Freiburg-Leipzig-Tübingen, 1899, 174.

<sup>25</sup> Debus, *Jerobeam*, 98-101.

<sup>26</sup> O. H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten* (WMANT 23), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1967, 66-72.

<sup>27</sup> Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 42-46.

<sup>28</sup> Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 203-07.

<sup>29</sup> S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings. The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 47), Leiden 1991, 140-42.

<sup>30</sup> Eynikel, *The Reform of King Josiah*, 93, 357-58.

<sup>31</sup> H.-D. Hoffmann, *Reform und Reformen: Untersuchungen zu einem Grundthema der deuteronomistischen Geschichtsschreibung* (AThANT 66), Zürich 1980, 127-28; Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 183-219.

<sup>32</sup> E.g., by A. Jepsen, *Die Quellen des Königsbuches*, Halle <sup>2</sup>1956; G. Baena, 'Carácter literario de 2 Reyes 17, 7-23', *Estudios Bíblicos* 33 (1974), 5-29; Nelson, *Double*



Both views do not seem very likely. Against the claim that 2 Kgs. 17:7-23 is a single literary unit, it could be argued that 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 and also 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 are independent literary compositions. Both textual units have their own characteristics. Different views on the fall of Samaria are developed as will be shown in this article. Literary critical subdivisions of 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 fail to appreciate the composition of the unit under consideration.

Therefore, I will now look at the internal literary composition of 2 Kgs. 17:21-23. For his assessment of the fall of Samaria, the author has chosen a chronological order. In a few sentences the history of the Northern Kingdom is summarized. This summary as such is a selection. Three phases are focussed upon:

1. 21 the period of Jeroboam
2. 22 the interim
3. 23 the period of the fall.

These three episodes are not narrated neutrally but are related from a specific theological or ideological perspective. The use of the word 'sin' and the claim that God is the one who acts in history reveal that the textual unit is related to a belief system.<sup>33</sup> This belief system and its view of history will be demonstrated by an analysis of the textual unit.

## 5.1. Analysis

### 5.1.1. Jeroboam I: A time of apostasy

2 Kgs. 17:21 refers back in the composition of the Book of Kings to the description of the reign of Jeroboam I. The genesis of the traditions concerning the first king of the Northern Kingdom is most likely very complex, although the views on this point differ fundamentally among scholars.<sup>34</sup> The author of 2 Kgs. 17:21 summarizes the traditions relating to Jeroboam in four distinct episodes.

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*Redaction*, 55-63; Würthwein, *Könige*, 391-92, 395-97; O'Brien, *Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis*, 208-09.

<sup>33</sup> On the concept 'belief system' see, e.g., M. B. Black, 'Belief Systems', in: J. J. Honigsmann (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago, 1973, 509-77.

<sup>34</sup> Compare for instance Weippert, 'Ätiologie des Nordreiches', 344-75, with R. L. Cohn, 'Literary Techniques in the Jeroboam Narrative', *ZAW* 97 (1985), 25-35.

### 5.1.2. The disruption of the Davidic Empire

In 1 Kgs. 11–14, the theme of the disruption of the Davidic empire can be found in three different contexts. In all three contexts the verb *qr* ‘to tear’, is consistently used with YHWH as subject:

- |   |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. In an oracle for Solomon                           | 1 Kgs. 11:11-13 |
| 2. In a word of the prophet Ahia directed to Jeroboam | 1 Kgs. 11:31    |
| 3. After the disruption in a prophecy by Ahia         | 1 Kgs. 14:8     |

The phrasing in 2 Kgs. 17:21 is close to all these three instances, but it is not a quotation of one of them. I agree with H. Weippert that 1 Kgs. 11:31 is part of the core of an old tradition.<sup>35</sup> 1 Kgs. 14:8 and 2 Kgs. 17:21 can be seen as texts that, by referring to an existing tradition, give an assessment of the history. This does not imply that both texts could have been written by the same hand or have been inserted by the same redactor. The differences between 2 Kgs. 17:21 and 1 Kgs. 11:31 can be explained by referring to a difference of opinion concerning the point in the narrative time in which their authors have formulated these clauses. 1 Kgs. 11:31 treats the disruption of the Davidic empire as the outcome of the sin of Solomon. The point of view is clearly from the Northern Kingdom: The disruption is seen as an event that was, in the first instance, a shift willed by God. 2 Kgs. 17:21 reveals a different angle: This text is written from a Jerusalemite perspective. This can be made clear by referring to the propositional construction that indicates that the Northern Kingdom was torn ‘from the House of David’.

### 5.1.3. Enthronement of Jeroboam I

The words ‘they had made Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, king’ make one think of the enthronement formulae that are used in the Book of Kings for the description of the enthronement of Israelite and Judaeans kings. The most clear parallel comes from 1 Kgs. 12:20: ‘and they made him king over the whole of Israel.’ This verse seems to be part of the ‘bereits redigierten Grundschrift’ of 1 Kgs. 12.<sup>36</sup> This implies that the author of 2 Kgs. 17:21 could have taken over this element from an already existing text.<sup>37</sup> The editor of 2 Kgs. 17:21 did rework the material, however. This becomes clear from the fact that the words ‘*al kol yisrā’ēl*, ‘over the whole of Israel’ are not taken over. In 1 Kgs. 12:20 these words indicate that there was a ‘they’ who wanted Jeroboam I to become king over the whole of Israel,

<sup>35</sup> Weippert, ‘Ätiologie des Nordreiches’, esp. 346-355, 374-375.

<sup>36</sup> Thus G. Vanoni, *Literarkritik und Grammatik: Untersuchungen der Wiederholungen und Spannungen in 1 Kön 11–12* (ATSAT 21), St. Ottilien 1984, 268.

<sup>37</sup> See also Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 85-86.

Judah included. The omission of the words indicates the theological perspective of the author.

#### 5.1.4. Jeroboam's incitement to apostasy

The motif of the leading away of Israel from YHWH by Jeroboam I has no literal parallel in 1 Kgs. 11–14. The expression *wayyidā'* in 2 Kgs. 17:21 should be seen as an interpretative summary of 1 Kgs. 12:25–32. In the textual unit mentioned, the establishment of the temple services in Bethel and Dan is described. The report in 2 Kgs. 17:21 is at first sight descriptive; that is, without clear assessment or judgment. The metaphorical significance of the verb *nd'ndh* that connects the clause with the image of adultery,<sup>38</sup> implies that the author(s) while summarising the history is (are) giving an assessment: the institution of these two cult practices is to be seen as a form of adultery from Yhwh. This makes clear the pro-Jerusalem point of view of the author(s) that only accepts Zion as a legitimate Yahwistic cult place.

#### 5.1.5. Jeroboam's incitement to sin

The retrospective view on the reign of Jeroboam I ends with a clause containing a concluding *qāṭal* form of the Hiph. of the verb *hṭ'*. A few remarks should be made concerning this verb. In the traditions proper about Jeroboam I, the verb *hṭ'* Hiph. does not occur. The form is, however, attested in 1 Kgs. 14:16. This verse is to be considered as part of the deuteronomistic redaction of the second prophecy of Ahiah.<sup>39</sup> Here, the Deuteronomist mentions two reasons for the fate which awaits Israel:

1. The sin committed by Jeroboam;
2. The sin committed by the people but caused by Jeroboam.

The wordings of these two reasons should be considered as interpretative summaries of events supposed to have taken place during the reign of Jeroboam I.

Further on in the Book of Kings, *hṭ'* Hiph. occurs frequently as a deuteronomistic phrase<sup>40</sup> which is used to refer to the conduct of rulers of the Northern Kingdom. This phrase is used as an evaluation of the fact that they caused their subjects to do things that continue the 'sins of Jeroboam'.<sup>41</sup>

In the chain of reasoning of 2 Kgs. 17:21–23 the words 'He caused them to sin' function as a hinge. After the negatively assessed deeds of the first

<sup>38</sup> See T. Kronholm, '*nādah*', in *TWAT* 5 (1986), 258–59.

<sup>39</sup> Debus, *Sünde Jerobeams*, 52; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 35–36.

<sup>40</sup> Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 340; Hoffmann, *Reform*, 331.

<sup>41</sup> Debus, *Sünde Jerobeams*.

sovereign of the Northern Kingdom, the reader is anxious to know whether his successors walked the same path. This is related in the next verse.

#### 5.1.6. Preliminary conclusion

2 Kgs. 17:21 presents an interpretive summary of the traditions concerning Jeroboam I. By doing so, the author is following the traditional chronology of these events. In 1 Kgs. 11–14, a theological tendency is observable: Jeroboam I is, in principle, a legitimate, god-willed king, but, by separating himself from the cult in Jerusalem, he brings himself in the wrong.<sup>42</sup> This tendency has been taken over by the author of 2 Kgs. 17:21.

It should be remarked that all the references in this verse are directed towards Jeroboam I – and some other rulers of the Northern Kingdom –. The perspective from which this verse was written most probably was the legitimate cult in Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty.

#### 5.2. Ongoing guilt

2 Kgs. 17:22 summarizes the history of the Northern Kingdom in the period between the reign of Jeroboam I and the fall of Samaria. Two centuries of history are reduced to two reproaches.

##### 5.2.1. To go in the ways of Jeroboam

The expression *hālak ... b<sup>e</sup>kol ḥaṭṭô't yorob'ām* has no exact parallel in the Book of Kings. Related expressions do, however, occur:

<i>hlk bkl ḥt'wt 'byw</i>	1 Kgs. 15:3	Abiam	S
<i>hlk bdrk 'byw wbh'tw</i>	1 Kgs. 15:26	Nadab	N
<i>hlk bdrk yrb'm wbh'tw</i>	1 Kgs. 15:34	Baasha	N
<i>hlk bdrk yrb'm wbh'tw</i>	1 Kgs. 16:19	Zimri	N
<i>hlk bdrk yrb'm wbh'tw</i>	1 Kgs. 16:26	Omri	N
<i>hlk bht'wt yrb'm</i>	1 Kgs. 16:31	Ahab	N
<i>hlk 'hr ḥt't yrb'm</i>	2 Kgs. 13:2	Jehoahaz	N

With the exception of Abiam, only rulers from the Northern Kingdom are listed here. It is remarkable that the exploits of Baasha, Zimri and Omri are evaluated by using the same phrase. According to H. Weippert, all the expressions listed – except for *hlk 'hr ḥt't yrb'm*, ‘to walk after the sins of Jeroboam’ (2 Kgs. 13:2, Jehoahaz) – belong to the repertoire of the Josianic

<sup>42</sup> See also 2 Chron. 11:4 and Cohn, ‘Literary Technique’, esp. 25, 35; McKenzie, *Trouble with Kings*, 41–59. 123–25.

Deuteronomists.<sup>43</sup> The salient difference between these formulas and the expression in 2 Kgs. 17:22 consist in the element of generalization. 2 Kgs. 17:22 refers the objectionable moral conduct of *all* the kings of Israel, not of a single representative. Moreover, in 2 Kgs. 17:22 the individuals mentioned are reproached for following *all* the sins of Jeroboam, and not just a single one.

### 5.2.2. No deviation

The expression *lo' sārû*, 'they did not deviate', with an object referring to the 'sins of Jeroboam', is frequently used in the Book of Kings in the assessments of kings and inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom:

2 Kgs. 3:3	Joram	N
2 Kgs. 10:29	Jehu	N
2 Kgs. 10:31	Jehu	N
2 Kgs. 13:2	Jehoahaz	N
2 Kgs. 13:6	Israelites	N
2 Kgs. 13:11	Joash	N
2 Kgs. 14:24	Jerobeam II	N
2 Kgs. 15:9	Zechariah	N
2 Kgs. 15:18	Menachem	N
2 Kgs. 15:24	Pekachiah	N
2 Kgs. 15:28	Pekah	N
2 Kgs. 17:22	–	

It should be remarked that in most of the texts mentioned in this outline, it is the *kings* who are reproached for not having deviated from the 'sins of Jeroboam', while in 2 Kgs. 17:22 this reproach concerns *Israelites*. Further, it is remarkable that the frequency with which the expression occurs in the Book of Kings increases when the catastrophe is getting closer.

### 5.3. Destruction

In 2 Kgs. 17:23 the carrying away into exile is narrated. The conquest of the city as such though not mentioned is implied. The carrying away into exile is depicted with the verb *swr* Hiph. and is seen as the fulfillment of prophetic preaching. The language is not specific or characteristic of a deuteronomistic author. One feature needs closer examination.

<sup>43</sup> H. Weippert, 'Die "deuteronomistischen" Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher', *Bibl* 53 (1972), 323-33.

The prophets are called ‘my servants the prophets’. This expression might have been taken over from Amos 3:7.<sup>44</sup> The expression also occurs in the greater deuteronomistic homily on the fall of Samaria (2 Kgs. 17:7-20). There is, however, one remarkable difference in the view on prophecy between 2 Kgs. 17:13 and 23. The author of 2 Kgs. 17:13 understands prophets to be those persons who had to warn the people with a summons for change and return to God and his commands. This view is related to the idea that God can delay or even postpone his judgment. In the view of 2 Kgs. 17:23, prophets have to announce a seemingly inevitable judgment.<sup>45</sup>

#### 5.4. Contrasting formulations

Before formulating my conclusions based on this analysis, I would like to refer to the idea of contrast related to the reproaches in 2 Kgs. 17:22. This idea of contrast can be demonstrated by comparing the expressions with other clauses in the Book of Kings. The expression:

*hlk bkl ḥt’t yrb ‘m* ‘to go in all the sins of Jeroboam’ 2 Kgs. 17:22

has a contrasting parallel in the phrase:

*hlk bkl drk dwl* ‘to go in the whole way of David’ 2 Kgs. 22:2.  
(Josiah)

*hlk bkl* introduces a negative assessment in 2 Kgs. 17:22 and a positive one in 2 Kgs. 22:2. Moreover, the individuals Jeroboam and Josiah are juxtaposed.

The expression *l’ swr*, ‘he did not deviate’, is used in the Book of Kings several times with kings of Judah as its subject. In these texts, it is related that David, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah did not deviate from the way of YHWH. In these texts the expression introduces a positive evaluation, while in 2 Kgs. 17:22 and the parallels mentioned above a negative evaluation is introduced.

These observations support the conclusion that 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 were written by a deuteronomistic author who wanted to emphasise the contrast

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. H. Weippert, ‘Der Beitrag außerbiblischer Prophetentexte zum Verständnis der Prosareden des Jeremiabuches’, in: P.-M. Bogaert (ed.), *Le livre de Jérémie* (BETHL 54), Leuven 1981, 83-104; C. van Leeuwen, *Amos* (POT), Nijkerk 1985, 113-14; *pace* e.g. W. H. Schmidt, ‘Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches’, *ZAW* 77 (1965), 183-88; J. A. Soggin, *Amos* (OTL), London 1987, 58.

<sup>45</sup> See Dietrich, *Propethie*, 41; I. L. Seeligman, ‘Die Auffassung von der Prophetie in der deuteronomistischen und chronistischen Geschichtsschreibung’, *VT Sup* 29 (1977), 267, 75.

between David and Josiah, on the one hand, and Jeroboam I and rulers of the Northern Kingdom, on the other.<sup>46</sup>

### 5.5. Conclusions

This analysis of 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 provokes a few remarks:

1. Differences have been observed between 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 and 21-23. In the first textual unit, both Judah and the Northern Kingdom are addressed. The text can be construed as a homily on the fall of Samaria and Jerusalem. In 21-23, on the other hand, traces can be seen of a contrast in evaluation between Judah and the Northern Kingdom. Further, both units are related with a different view on prophecy. On the level of language, no specific similarities have been found. Based on these differences a literary critical subdivision is plausible.
2. In view of its rounded structure, 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 can be construed as an independent textual unit. The adjective 'independent' means that the unit is not dependent on 7-20. The unit is not independent in the sense that it could have existed a unit on its own. The verses under consideration were most probably a part of the original composition or of one of the editions of the Book of Kings.

### 6. Dating 2 Kings 17:21-23

Some exegetes date 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 to the period before the Babylonian Exile and thus as a text older than 7-20.<sup>47</sup> Others interpret it as a later addition.<sup>48</sup> Dating Biblical texts is no easy task since no generally-accepted procedures for dating texts exist. Generally the lock-and-key method is applied. An exemplary application of this method can be found in Hard-

<sup>46</sup> See also the observations of Weippert, 'Die "deuteronomistischen" Beurteilungen', 324-25 (David and Jeroboam are juxtaposed in the schemes IIS and IIN); R. E. Friedman., 'From Egypt to Egypt: Dtr1 and Dtr2', in: B. Halpern, J. D. Levenson (eds.), *Traditions in Transformation* (FS F. M. Cross), Winona Lake 1981, 170 (in Dtr1, life under the promise for David in Judah is contrasted with the 'sins of Jeroboam' in the Northern Kingdom).

<sup>47</sup> Benzinger, *Bücher der Könige*, 174; C. F. Burney, *Notes on the Hebrew Texts of the Book of Kings*, Oxford 1903, 330-331; Gray, *I & II Kings*, 638-650; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 207; E. Eynikel, *Reform of King Josiah*.

<sup>48</sup> Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien*, 85; Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 41-46; Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 63; M. Z. Brettler, *The Creation of History in Ancient Israel*, London-New York 1995, 282.

meier's monograph on 2 Kgs. 18–20.<sup>49</sup> The text – either in its original or in its final form – is to be considered as a key. The reconstructed history of the time in which a narrative was written or in which it received its final form is to be seen as a lock in which the key can be turned. Meaning and significance can be read from what happens when the key is turned in the lock. For instance, Hardmeier construes the original narrative in 2 Kgs. 18–20 as the 'Erzählung von der Assyrischen Bedrohung und der Befreiung Jerusalems'.<sup>50</sup> Reading this ABBJ as a literary composition, the following picture arises: The fact that apparently two Assyrian campaigns against Judah/Jerusalem are mentioned is not suggested by historical data about two campaigns nor by the assumption that two sources depicting the same event have been conflated in the final narrative, but should be resolved at the narrotological level. The narrator has built in an element of complication: After Hezekiah's payment of tribute an Assyrian withdrawal is expected but does not take place immediately. The significance of this complication becomes clear when the key is turned in the lock. Hardmeier argues that the final years before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians should be seen as the historical context of the ABBJ narrative. On the level of historical reconstruction it should be noted that a temporary withdrawal by the Babylonian forces in 588 BCE was provoked by a march of Egyptian troops to relieve the beleaguered Judean capital.

A few remarks about this lock-and-key method need to be made. First, there is the possible pitfall of circular reasoning, especially when the key has been smoothed literary-critically, since in that process historical arguments also have a part to. Second, there will always be another lock that fits the key. The Maccabaeen age, for instance, could provide a historical context for the ABBJ narrative as well. This implies that also on a secondary occasion the rereading of the text could provoke a significant meaning. Third, our knowledge of historical processes in Ancient Israel is both limited and biased.<sup>51</sup> Taking a look away from the Old Testament, which in itself is not a primary historical source, the evidence looks like a jigsaw puzzle with too many lost pieces. All these remarks imply that the procedure for dating Biblical texts still remain highly tentative. From the point of view of historical methodology, it still is possible to formulate – within the boundaries of these limitations – the 'key-and-lock', albeit in a way that is still open to debate.

<sup>49</sup> C. Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18–20 und Jer 37–40* (BZAW 187), Berlin-New York 1990.

<sup>50</sup> 'Narrative on the Assyrian Threat and on the Deliverance of Jerusalem'.

<sup>51</sup> See most recently K. W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, London-New York 1996.



### 6.1. Proposal

In my view, 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 belongs to a redactional layer in the Book of Kings that was composed during the reign of king Josiah, some decades before the fall of Jerusalem.

### 6.2. Argument

Two features support this proposal.

#### 6.2.1. 'Until this day'

The expression '*ad hayyôm hazzeh*, 'until this day', occurs frequently in the Old Testament. It is attested in various sources, traditions and genres. The expression can hardly be seen as characteristic of a single author, editor or redactor. This implies that, on a linguistic level of arguing, the expression cannot be used as a means to assign a text to a certain author, editor or redactor. At a conceptual level, however, more can be said. When looking at the expression in its various contexts, the word-group apparently refers to a variety of facts or institutions of a political, geographic, sociological or cultic character with long roots in history but still existing in the time of the (final) redaction of the textual unit under consideration. As such the expression reflects the idea of cultural continuity in ancient Israel. In 2 Kgs. 17:21-23, the expression refers to the fact that Assyrian exile still exists in the time of the author or the redactor of the text. This might be an indication of a pre-Babylonian-exilic date for the textual unit, since after the collapse of the Assyrian empire in 612 BCE the remark would be rather meaningless.<sup>52</sup>

#### 6.2.2. Contrasting evaluations

Above some observations have been made about implied contrasting formulations (5.4.). These observations will be elaborated a little more, here. The reproaches in 2 Kgs. 17:22 are all directed exclusively toward kings and inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom. In the other evaluation of the fall of Samaria, 2 Kgs. 17:7-20, the reproaches have a broader framework. An investigation of parallels for the reproaches in the textual elements B (8-12) and B' (14-17) shows that kings and inhabitants of Judah and also of Israel are referred to in the same account. As noted above, this

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<sup>52</sup> See also Burney, *Notes*, xvi-xvii; Gray, *I & II Kings*, 13; F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge 1973, 275; H. Tadmor, M. Cogan, 'Ahaz and Tiglath-Pileser in the Book of Kings: Historiographic Considerations', *Bibl* 60 (1979), 497-98.

is one of the arguments in favour of treating 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 as a textual unit that could have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>53</sup>

Therefore, it is plausible to consider 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 as an older textual unit which presupposes a different theological point of view. The cult(s) installed by Jeroboam I at Bethel and Dan is interpreted from the perspective of the cult at Jerusalem that is seen as the only legitimate form of Yahwism. The various and varying dynasties in Samaria stand square to the one legitimate dynasty ruling at Jerusalem. This observation concurs with a remark by H. Weippert that, in the Josianic RII, David and Jeroboam stand juxtaposed<sup>54</sup> and agrees with the theology of Dtr1 as described by Cross and Nelson. According to them, this first deuteronomistic author from the period of Josiah reviews Israelite history from two perspectives. First, there is a clear transition from 'the sins of Jeroboam' to the destruction of Samaria. The other point of view can be depicted as everlasting divine loyalty to the Davidic dynasty. Both lines meet in the person of king Josiah who is seen as the image of David and who is devastating the offensive sanctuaries in a program which was intended to achieve the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup>

### 7. *Belief system and ideology*

With these last remarks, the boundary between analysis and interpretation has been crossed. In this final section the belief system and ideology to which 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 was related, will be sketched.

#### 7.1. Belief system

##### 7.1.1. God

In a direct line with 1 Kgs. 11 God is seen as originally wanting the separation into two kingdoms after the death of Solomon. Because of the accumulation of guilt originated by the first king of the Northern Kingdom, he felt obliged to remove Israel from his face which means a period of exile outside the promised land. The author of 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 operates with a concept of God in which God can be seen as the decisive power behind historical processes. Von Rad stipulated that, by the 'sin of Jeroboam', the

<sup>53</sup> See Becking, 'Theologie na de ondergang', 150-74; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 207. According to P. A. Viviano, '2 Kings 17: A Rhetorical and Form-critical Analysis', *CBQ* 49 (1987), 548-59, the whole of 2 Kgs. 17:7-20 refers to Judah. Brettler, *Creation of History*, 272-274, interprets 2 Kgs. 17:7-12 as a judgement on Judah, wrongly placed by the editor in his composition.

<sup>54</sup> Weippert, 'Die "deuteronomistischen" Beurteilungen', 324-25.

<sup>55</sup> Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 274-89; Nelson, *Double Redaction*.

fate of the Northern Kingdom was in fact sealed.<sup>56</sup> In my view the word 'fate' is a misjudgment in this connection for two reasons. First, in the view of the Josianic deuteronomistic historian, historical processes are not determined by fate. God is acting and directing the course of history by reacting to human deeds. Second, the clauses in verse 22 function as an indication that kings and inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom persevered the trail set by Jeroboam I. Between 'apostasy' and 'destruction' lies a period in which they could have changed their ways. This implies that God is seen as giving the possibility of change to humans. His way of ruling history is not defined by a design fixed from the beginning. Moreover, the way in which God directs historical processes can be summarized in the idea of synergy: It is through human actions that the divine will is fulfilled.<sup>57</sup>

### 7.1.2. Mankind

Human beings are responsible for their own deeds. An individual cannot escape from the consequences of his/her personal misdoings by hiding behind others.

### 7.1.3. Sin

The failure of persons in their relation with God is indicated by this idea. This implies that the author had in mind an idea of right conduct. From the context in the Book of Kings that failure is especially related to cultic affairs: the institution of the cults at Bethel and Dan. Cult and religion, however, also have an ideological and political impact. Sin is seen here not only as personal misconduct or unbalancing of the relation with YHWH, but especially as an alienation of the politics of the Davidic dynasty of whom Josiah is seen as the true representative. It should be noted that sins in inter-human contexts, e.g. the not supporting the widow and the orphan, are not referred to in this textual unit. This observation underscores the ideological character of the text. Finally, sin is not seen as something that is inevitable. The reproach that they did not deviate from the sins of Jeroboam stresses the fact that sin rests on the free choice of responsible individuals.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels*, München, <sup>6</sup>1969, 352.

<sup>57</sup> See for instance the remarks by Eslinger, *Into the Hands*, 216-17.

<sup>58</sup> A systematic conceptual analysis of the Biblical idea of sin can be found in R. Knierim, *The Task of Old Testament Theology: Method and Cases*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge 1995, 424-52.

#### 7.1.4. Future

There is no trace of hope in 2 Kgs. 17:21-23. The history of the Northern Kingdom seems to end in a cul-de-sac.<sup>59</sup>

#### 7.2. Ideology

In its original historical context, the belief system to which 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 is related is also a form of ideology. In short, texts like 2 Kgs. 17:21-23 functioned as ideological supports for the political and religious orders of Josiah. In comparison with the negative depiction of the Northern Kingdom, the image of Judah is less flawed than that of its counterpart. As in a black and white drawing, the author provokes the contours of a flawless and benevolent Jerusalem.

Finally, a tradition-historical remark should be made. The Josianic redaction of the Book of Kings is not the final redaction of this text. During the exile a second (or third) redaction took place. This editor took over many features from the already-existing text. This implies that the Josianic redaction was treated as a so-called 'classic text'.<sup>60</sup> Nevertheless, the final editor added another evaluation of the fall of Samaria, 2 Kgs. 17:7-20. Here, the ideology is not related to a contrast between 'good' and 'bad', North and South. By way of correction, the final edition of the Book of Kings places Israel in its entirety under prophetic criticism.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>59</sup> In 2 Esdras 13:39-47, the hope is expressed that the Israelites might return from the nether world at the end of time.

<sup>60</sup> See H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode*, Tübingen 1975, especially 260-65, 274-75, 363-64; M. G. Brett, *Biblical Criticism in Crisis: The Impact of the Canonical Approach on Old Testament Studies*, Cambridge 1991, 135-48.

<sup>61</sup> I would like to thank Bram van Putten, Utrecht University, for his critical remarks on an earlier draft of this paper and Dr Peter Staples for editing it.

## Chapter VIII: Chronology: A Skeleton without Flesh? Sennacherib's Campaign as a Case-Study<sup>\*</sup>

“But there is a hitch. As we put meat and muscles on the bare bones of the happening-truth, we can be caught up – captured, if you will – within our own stories. We become confused about where the happening-truth leaves us off and the story-truth begins, because the story-truth, which is so much more vivid, detailed and *real* than the happening-truth, becomes our reality.”

Elizabeth Loftus<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

When queuing for the reception in the city hall of Oslo during the IOSOT meeting of 1998, I had an interesting discussion with Axel Knauf. He was responding to my paper in which, among other things, I had expressed my view that any history is a reconstructed representation of the past. In this reconstruction the symbol system of the historian plays an important part in the selection and the arrangement of the material. By implication, any history is a subjective picture of the past.<sup>2</sup> Knauf challenged my view by stating that objective information on the past is nevertheless possible.<sup>3</sup> We soon agreed that chronological data supply trustworthy information on the past and that this information is more than helpful in constructing the skeleton for a history. They are the ‘bare bones of the happening-truth’. A skeleton does not equal the body, however. Bare bones need muscles on them in order to function. The methodological question to be discussed in this paper therefore would be: How helpful are the chronological data for a historical

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<sup>\*</sup> Originally published as: B. Becking, ‘Chronology: A Skeleton without Flesh? Sennacherib's Campaign as a Case-Study’, in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *‘Like a Bird in a Cage’: The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE* (ESHM 4; JSOT Sup 363), Sheffield 2003, 46–72. The abundance of studies on the topic is so overwhelming, that I had to make a choice in the literature referred to in the footnotes. I hope to have made the right choice and apologize for not having quoted everybody. The dissertation of P. K. Hooker, *The Kingdom of Hezekiah: Judah in the Geo-political Context of the Late Eighth Century BCE*, Ann Arbor 1993, unfortunately was not at my disposal.

<sup>1</sup> E. F. Loftus, K. Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory*, New York 1994, 39.

<sup>2</sup> B. Becking, ‘No More Grapes from the Vineyard?: A Plea for a Historical-Critical Approach in the Study of the Old Testament’, see p. 35.

<sup>3</sup> Without, however, giving a connotation of the adjective ‘objective’. See also his remarks in E. A. Knauf, ‘From History to Interpretation’, in: D. V. Edelman (ed.), *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOT Sup 127), Sheffield 1991, 26–64.

reconstruction of Sennacherib's campaign to Judah? A first step would be to display the available evidence.

## 2. *Calendars, chronicles and king-lists*

Long ago, Finkelstein has argued that a group of lists and list-like texts are the only Mesopotamian inscriptions that are not "motivated by purposes other than the desire to know what really happened".<sup>4</sup> In search of 'objective history', it would be of great importance to analyse these inscriptions.

### 2.1. Eponym calendars

The Eponym calendars are a primary source for the reconstruction of the chronological framework of the history of Ancient Mesopotamia. The lists are a by-product of the Assyrian (and Babylonian) administration. Years were named after an important official, hence the expression: eponyms. The lists were a useful tool in dating events, legal decisions, business documents etc. Scribes throughout the empire were able to check information. In some of the lists additional information is supplied in mentioning important events from a specific year. This additional information is related to features as royal building projects, military campaigns and celestial events. The eponymate of Bur-Sagillê during the reign of Ashur-Dan III mentions a solar eclipse. Modern astrological calculations arrive at an eclipse in June 763 BCE. This date perfectly matches the reign of the Assyrian king mentioned. This and other synchronisms make the Eponym calendars a trustworthy source.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, not much specific evidence for the reign of Sennacherib is given. The eponym for the year 701 BCE has been Hanânu.<sup>6</sup> The eponym calendar B<sup>6</sup> supplies some interesting information:

- 705 On the twelfth Ab, Sennacherib [became] king,  
 704 t[o ] Larak, Sarabanu, [ ]; the palace of Kilizi was made ;  
 in [ ]; the nobles against ... [ ].<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> J. J. Finkelstein, 'Mesopotamian Historiography', *PAPS* 107 (1963), 461-72; see also J. van Seters, *In Search of History: Historiography in the Ancient World and the Origins of Biblical History*, New Haven-London 1983, 55-99.

<sup>5</sup> A recent presentation and discussion of the material can be found in A.R. Millard, *The Eponyms of the Assyrian Empire 910-612 BC* (SAAS 2), Helsinki 1994, esp. 1-14; see also J.K. Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions and Syria-Palestine* (JDDS 1), Hong Kong 1995, 7-18.

<sup>6</sup> See Millard, *Eponyms*, 49.

<sup>7</sup> B<sup>6</sup> Rev:11-15; see Millard, *Eponyms*, 48.

The eponym calendar B<sup>7</sup> has the entry for 701:

701 [ f]rom the land of Halzi<sup>8</sup>

This does not supply much information, however.

A second group of cuneiform texts that are useful for reconstructing the chronology of the period under consideration are the Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles. These texts narrate longer periods of ancient Mesopotamian history. Their information is based on astrological diaries, which make them trustworthy to some degree.<sup>9</sup> As for Sennacherib and his campaign to Jerusalem, they, unfortunately, supply not much evidence. In Babylonian Chronicle I a large section is dedicated to the reign of Sennacherib.<sup>10</sup> The information in this section is, however, confined to Sennacherib's quarrels and clashes with Elam in the east and with Babylon. No mention is made of a campaign to the west. This absence of evidence, however, cannot be assessed as the evidence for the absence or non-existence of a campaign to Judah in 701 BCE for the perspective of this chronicle is very much Babylon-centered. The same holds for the other reference to Sennacherib in the chronicles. In a section, transmitted in two different chronicles we read:

For eight years during the reign of Sennacherib, for twelve years during the reign of Esarhaddon – twenty years in sum – Bel stayed in Baltil<sup>11</sup> and the *Akitu* festival did not take place.<sup>12</sup>

This piece of evidence stresses the fact that during a period of Assyrian overlordship over Babylon the important New Year festival could not be executed in view of the fact that the statue of Marduk<sup>13</sup> was in exile in Assyria.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> B<sup>7</sup>:1'; see Millard, *Eponyms*, 49.

<sup>9</sup> See A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5), Locust Valley 1975; A. K. Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', in: *RLA* 6, 86-89; Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 79-92; J. A. Brinkman, 'The Babylonian Chronicle Revisited', in: T. Abusch *et al.* (eds.), *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (HSS 37), Atlanta 1990, 73-104.

<sup>10</sup> Bab Chron I ii:19-iii:36; see Grayson, *Chronicles*, 76-81; A. Laato, 'Assyrian propaganda and the falsification of history in the royal inscriptions of Sennacherib', *VT* 45 (1995), 203-09.

<sup>11</sup> Baltil is the indication in neo-Babylonian for the city of Ashur.

<sup>12</sup> Esarhaddon Chronicle (Grayson, *Chronicles*, 127):31-32 and Akitu Chronicle (Grayson, *Chronicles*, 131):1-4.

<sup>13</sup> As in DtIsa. Bel is a name for Marduk; see T. Abusch, 'Marduk', in: *DDD*<sup>2</sup>, 543-49.

<sup>14</sup> On the Akitu-festival see, e.g., J. A. Black, 'The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon. "Taking Bel by the Hand" and a Cultic Picnic', *Religion* 11 (1981), 39-59; K. van der Toorn, 'The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study', in: J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (VT Sup 43), Leiden 1991, 331-39.

The Mesopotamian King-lists supply data as to the sequence and the duration of the respective kings.<sup>15</sup> Sennacherib is referred to in the following lists:

1. Babylonian King List A IV:8-20<sup>16</sup>

8	2 (years)	Pulu <sup>17</sup>
9	5 (years)	Ululaya, <sup>18</sup> dynasty of Ashur
10	12 (years)	Marduk-apla-iddina, <sup>19</sup> dynasty of the Sealand
11	5 (years)	Sargon
12	2 (years)	Sennacherib, dynasty of Habigal <sup>20</sup>
13	1 months	Marduk-zākir-šumi, son of Ardu
14	9 months	Marduk-apla-iddina, soldier of Habi
15	3 (years)	Bel-ibni, dynasty of Babylon
16	6 (years)	Aššur-nadin-šumi, dynasty of Habigal
17	1 (year)	Nergal-ušeziḫ
18	4 (?; years)	Mušeziḫ-Marduk, dynasty of Babylon
19	8 (?; years)	Sennacherib
20	x (years)	Esarha[ddon]

This text lists the rulers over Babylon. It indicates that after the death of Sargon II, Sennacherib took over the Babylonian throne for two years and that at the end of his reign he had full control over Babylon. In the intermediate period, there was a constant interchange of rulers over Babylonia some local rulers and some puppet kings under Assyrian control. This evidence concurs with the remarks in the Annals of Sennacherib that he had to establish his power over Babylon several times after rebellions of local rulers against his rule or against his *locum tenens*.

<sup>15</sup> For an outline see W. Röllig, 'Zur Typologie und Entstehung der babylonischen und assyrischen Königslisten', in: M. Dietrich, W. Röllig (eds.), *lišan mithurti* (FS W. von Soden; AOAT 1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, 265-77; Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', 89-125; Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 68-76.

<sup>16</sup> See A. L. Oppenheim, in: *ANET*, 272; Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', 90-96; A. R. Millard, 'Babylonian King Lists', in: *COS I*, 462. The Ptolemaic Canon seems to have used the tradition present in Babylonian King-List A, although it has replaced Sennacherib twice by βασιλευτα; cf. Grayson, 'Königslisten und Chroniken', 101.

<sup>17</sup> = Tiglathpileser III.

<sup>18</sup> = Shalmaneser V.

<sup>19</sup> = Merdodakhbaladan II.

<sup>20</sup> Most probably a form of Hanigalbat, a traditional term for Upper Mesopotamia, see Millard, 'Babylonian King Lists', 462.



2. Synchronistic King List IV:1-10<sup>21</sup>

1	[Senn]acherib, king of Assyria	[.....]
2	Nabu-apla-iddina, his master	[.....]
3		[...] x [...] <sup>22</sup>
4		king of Babylon, after the people of [Babylonia]
5		broke the treaty
6		[Aš]šur-nadin-šumi was placed on the throne
7	Sennacherib	Nergal-šeziḫ, son of Ga[h]ul
8		Mušeziḫ-Marduk, son of Dakuri
9		kings of Babylonia
10	Sennacherib, king of Ashur	and Babel

This list is less informative on dates, but concurs with the evidence of the Babylonian King-List A.

3. Synchronistic King List Fragment IV:4<sup>23</sup>

4	Sennach[erib]
5	Esar[haddon]
6	Ashur[banipal]

This list only confirms the order of the Assyrian Kings.

The name Sennacherib might be restored in a fragment of another Synchronistic King List.<sup>24</sup> The Assyrian King Lists end with Ashur-Nerari V and Shalmaneser V respectively, not supplying evidence about Sennacherib.<sup>25</sup>

In what does this exercise result? From the evidence it can be inferred that Sennacherib was king over Assyria from 705-681 BCE. A campaign against Judah is not attested in these inscriptions. That, however, does not falsify the assumption that the King besieged Jerusalem in 701 BCE. The basis for an ‘objective’ history is, however, rather small. This implies that other texts should be taken into consideration.

<sup>21</sup> See *ARAB* II, § 1188; A. L. Oppenheim, in: *ANET*, 272-74; Grayson, ‘Königslisten und Chroniken’, 116-21.

<sup>22</sup> *ARAB* II, § 1188 reads Bêl-[ibni]; according to Grayson, ‘Königslisten und Chroniken’, 120, no traces of this name are left.

<sup>23</sup> Grayson, ‘Königslisten und Chroniken’, 121-22.

<sup>24</sup> Grayson, ‘Königslisten und Chroniken’, 125, 135.

<sup>25</sup> The “Khorsabad King List” and the “SDAS King List”, edited by I. J. Gelb, ‘Two Assyrian King Lists’, *JNES* 13 (1954), 209-30; see also Grayson, ‘Königslisten und Chroniken’, 101-15.

## 2.2. Data from Assyrian royal inscriptions

The deeds and doings of Sennacherib are recorded in a great variety of texts. Thanks to the careful and detailed research of Eckart Frahm, we now have a better understanding of the available evidence.<sup>26</sup> It should be noted that the Annals and many of the other inscriptions have a narrative character and that they cannot be assessed as objective reports on past events.<sup>27</sup> The texts are biased and drenched in royal ideology. Although the colophons of these texts make clear that most of them have been composed during the reign of Sennacherib and by implication are based on ‘eye-witness reports’, they still are good examples of narrative history in which the selection and the arrangement of the available material is steered by the symbol system of its composers.<sup>28</sup>

This implies that the elements in the story should be interpreted before using them in a historical reconstruction. A history based on this interpretation is by implication not an objective history, but a tentative proposal. Nevertheless, the Annals and other inscriptions of Sennacherib supply us with some ‘hard facts’ as to the chronology of his reign and his campaigns which are summarized in the following outline:<sup>29</sup>

Year:	Campaign/ <i>gerru</i> :	Main activity:
705		Sennacherib succeeds his father Sargon II on the throne
704	1	Marduk-zākir-šumi II usurps the throne in Babylon After a month he is relieved by Marduk-aplu-iddina II Sennacherib reacts with a punitive campaign late in the year
703	1	Continuation of the campaign Pacification of Babylonia
702	1 + 2	On return from Babylonia in the beginning of 702 the Assyrians subdued the cities of Hirimmu and Hararatu in the eastern Tigris-area

<sup>26</sup> E. Frahm, *Einleitung in die Sanherib-Inschriften* (AfO Beiheft 26), Horn 1997.

<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 60-68; H. Tadmor, ‘History and Ideology in the Assyrian Royal Inscriptions’, in: F. M. Fales (ed.), *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions: New Horizons* (OAC 17), Roma 1981, 13-33; Laato, ‘Assyrian Propaganda’.

<sup>28</sup> For a methodical background to this approach of history writing see my paper ‘Ezra’s Reenactment of the Exile’, in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive: ‘The Exile’ as History and Ideology* (ESHM 2; JSOT Sup 278), Sheffield 1998, 40-61.

<sup>29</sup> For evidence and secondary literature see Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 4-19.

		The second campaign as such is directed against inhabitants of the Zagros-mountains
701	3	Campaign against the West: Sidon, Philistia and Jerusalem
700	4	Consolidation of the relations in Babylonia
699	–	Building activities in Nineveh
698	–	Building activities in Nineveh
697	5	Campaigns against the North and the Northwest

Later on Sennacherib was mainly occupied in Elam and Babylonia. This outline indicates that Sennacherib in the beginning of his reign was occupied with settling peace in Babylonia, 'Persia' and the Levant. A campaign against Jerusalem is part of this picture.

### 3. Chronology

#### 3.1. Hezekiah's fourteenth year

Within the discussion on the chronology of the Assyrian threat for Judah, the interpretation of the phrase 'the fourteenth year of Hezekiah' plays an important role. In 2 Kgs. 18:13 a campaign by Sennacherib against Judah is dated in this year. When was this 'fourteenth year'? When 701 BCE is construed as Hezekiah's fourteenth year, then a chronological oddity is implied. That date would imply that Hezekiah became king in 715/714 BCE. According to the Book of Kings, Hezekiah already was king over Judah at the time of the fall of Samaria. Regardless of the date of this event in 723, 722/21 or 720 BCE<sup>30</sup> this date cannot easily be reconciled with Hezekiah ascending the throne in 715/714 BCE.<sup>31</sup> Before making further remarks on this point, it should be noted that my basic assumption is that the numbers for the reigns of the Kings of Israel and Judah in the Book of Kings are not to be assessed as a deliberate and meaningful 'invention' by the redactors of the book. Until they are falsified by contemporaneous evidence I take them for historical trustworthy.<sup>32</sup> This does not imply that I share the "maximal-

<sup>30</sup> For a discussion see B. Becking, *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* (SHANE 2), Leiden 1992.

<sup>31</sup> See also the remarks by G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (SHCANE 9), Leiden 1996, 100-01; D. Edelman, 'What If We Had No Accounts of Sennacherib's Third Campaign or the Palace Reliefs Depicting His Capture of Lachish?', *BibInt* 8 (2000), 88-103.

<sup>32</sup> They might be based on an Israelite King List, the existence of which has been proposed by S. B. Parker, 'Did the authors of the Book of Kings make use of royal inscriptions?', *VT* 50 (2000), 374-76, or on the data from an Israelite Chronicle.

istic” view that data in the Hebrew Bible are *always* reliable unless proven otherwise. Such a view is an indication of (1) dogmatic prejudice and (2) too positivistic an approach in the field of historical science.<sup>33</sup> The observation that the dating-formula is phrased in a different way in 2 Kgs. 18:3 does not supply a falsification of my theses.<sup>34</sup>

As a starting point for my chronological argument, I take the rebellion that broke out in Samaria and Ashkelon during or after the campaign of Tiglath-Pileser III in 732 BCE against the West. As a result of this campaign Damascus was conquered by the Assyrians and the Northern Kingdom of Israel was reduced in territory to the area surrounding Samaria. But then Pekah, king of Israel, and Mitinti, ruler over Ashkelon, were driven from the throne by Hoshea and Rukibtî.<sup>35</sup> A new reading of Tiglath-Pileser III Summary Inscription 9: Rev. 11 made clear that the new king of Israel, Hoshea paid tribute to his Assyrian overlord in ... *Sa]rrabanu*.<sup>36</sup> This collation is of great chronological importance. From other sources it is known that the Assyrian king besieged Sarrabanu during his campaign in Babylonia in 731 BCE.<sup>37</sup> Relating these two pieces of evidence it becomes very probable that Hoshea paid this tribute in 731 BCE to secure the formal recognition of his reign.<sup>38</sup> This leads to the synchronism that the first full regnal year of Hoshea must have been autumn 732 – autumn 731 BCE.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Knauf, ‘From History to Interpretation’, 27-34; Becking, ‘No More Grapes’; E. A. Knauf, ‘The “Low Chronology” and How to Deal with It’, *BN* 101 (2000), 59.

<sup>34</sup> Pace L. Camp, *Hiskija und Hiskijabild: Analyse und Interpretation von 2 Kön 18-20* (MTA 9), Altenberge 1990, 96-97.

<sup>35</sup> See Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 19-20.

<sup>36</sup> Collation of P. Hulin in: R. Borger, H. Tadmor, ‘Zwei Beiträge zur alttestamentlichen Wissenschaft aufgrund der Inschriften Tiglathpilesers III.’, *ZAW* 94 (1984), 246; see also H. Tadmor, *The Inscriptions of Tiglathpileser III King of Assyria*, Jerusalem 1994, 189, 277. The reading has been adopted by G.W. Jones, *1 and 2 Kings* (NCBC), Grand Rapids 1984, 545; N. Na’aman, ‘Historical and chronological notes on the Kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the eighth century B.C.’, *VT* 36 (1986), 71-74; S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis* (SBL DS 123), Atlanta 1990, 57 n. 141; H. Cazelles, ‘La guerre syro-ephraïmite dans le contexte de la politique internationale’, in: D. Garone, F. Israel (eds.), *Storia e Tradizione di Israele* (FS J. A. Soggin), Brescia 1991, 44; Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 19, 53; G. W. Ahlström, *The History of Ancient Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to Alexander’s Conquest* (JSOT Sup 146), Sheffield 1993, 636; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 183; K. L. Younger, ‘The Deportations of the Israelites’, *JBL* 117 (1998), 210.

<sup>37</sup> On this campaign see: H. Tadmor, *Introductory Remarks to a New Edition of the Annals of Tiglath-Pileser III* (PIASH 2,9), Jerusalem 1969, 15, 18; W. Schramm, *Einleitung in die assyrischen Königsinschriften* (HdO I,V,1/2), Leiden 1973, 131; Borger, Tadmor, ‘Zwei Beiträge’, 247-48.

<sup>38</sup> See Borger, Tadmor, ‘Zwei Beiträge’, 249; Na’aman, ‘Historical and chronological notes’, 73-74.

<sup>39</sup> Thus Borger, Tadmor, ‘Zwei Beiträge’, 249; Na’aman, ‘Historical and chronological notes’, 73-74; Tadmor, *Tiglathpileser III*, 277-78; Galil, *Chronology*, p. 70; Kuan, *Neo-Assyrian Historical Inscriptions*, 185; M. Dijkstra, ‘Chronological Problems of the Eighth Century BCE: A New Proposal for Dating the Samaria Ostraca’, in: J. C. de

These observations are relevant for the chronology of Hoshea. The years Hoshea 7 and 9 are then to be dated in 725 and 723 BCE; which means that the fall of Samaria took place in 723 BCE, i.e. in the reign of Shalmaneser V, but not in his final year.

The synchronism mentioned above, however, is also relevant to the chronology of Hezekiah since this date for the conquest of Samaria fits the data of his reign. According to 2 Kgs. 17:1 Hoshea became king in the twelfth year of Ahaz. Supposing that Hoshea ascended the throne after the revolt in the summer of 732, the twelfth year of Ahaz must have been spring 732 – spring 731 (or autumn 733 – autumn 732). The regnal years of Ahaz were probably reckoned from the moment of his co-regency with Jotham and not from the moment of his undivided rule after the death of Jotham. Ahaz reigned for 16 years. His 16th year, the year of his death, is consequently spring 728 – spring 727 BCE (or autumn 729 – autumn 728 BCE).

It is important to note that the accession-year of Hezekiah is not the same as the year of Ahaz's death. This can be inferred from 2 Kgs. 18:1. Hezekiah ascended the throne in the third year of Hoshea i.e. autumn 730 – autumn 729 BCE. This calculation suggests that Hezekiah became co-regent in Ahaz's 15th year.

This implies that the fourth year of Hezekiah must have been the period spring 725 – spring 724 BCE (or autumn 726 – autumn 725). The fall of Samaria, dated in 2 Kgs. 18:10 in Hezekiah's sixth year, therefore took place in the period spring 723 – spring 722 BCE (or autumn 724 – autumn 723): probably in the summer of 723 BCE. This date fits the above mentioned chronology of Hoshea and has some interesting implications for the other chronological data in 2 Kgs. 18. I disagree with Galil who dates Hezekiah's fourth year in 722/21 BCE and does not account for the synchronisms mentioned in 2 Kgs. 18:10.<sup>40</sup>

2 Kgs. 18:13 mentions an Assyrian military campaign against Jerusalem which took place in the 'fourteenth year of Hezekiah'. A traditional view takes the textual fragment 2 Kgs. 18:13-16 to be a trustworthy primary source.<sup>41</sup> The textual unit is taken as a starting point for complicated chrono-

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Moor, H. F. van Rooy (eds.), *Past, Present, Future: The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (OTS 45), Leiden 2000, 78. The view has inconvincingly been challenged by J. Goldberg, 'Two Assyrian Campaigns against Hezekiah and Later Eighth Century Biblical Chronology', *Bibl* 80 (1999), 378-80. Goldberg assumes 729 BCE to be the first regnal year of Hoshea and he makes this year the starting point of his calculations that, however, are very problematical for the regnal years of Pekah, king of Israel.

<sup>40</sup> Galil, *Chronology*, 83-97.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., e.g., Van Seters, *In Search of History*, p. 301; E. Vogt, *Der Aufstand Hiskias und der Belagerung Jerusalems 701 v. Chr.* (AnBi 106), Roma 1986, 24; K.A.D. Smelik, *Converting the Past: Studies in Ancient Israelite and Moabite Historiography* (OTS 28), Leiden 1992, 124; J. A. Soggin, *An Introduction to the History of Israel and Judah: Se-*

logical reasoning leading to the conclusion that this source (2 Kgs. 18:13-16) takes 715 or 714 BCE to be the first year of Hezekiah. The fourteenth year of Hezekiah must then have been 701 BCE, in which year the expedition of Sennacherib mentioned in the Assyrian sources took place. This traditional view, however, would imply two different systems of dating events from the reign of Hezekiah within the one chapter (2 Kgs. 18).

In my chronological proposal, the fourteenth year of Hezekiah was the period between spring 715 and spring 714 BCE (or autumn 716 – autumn 715).<sup>42</sup> It would be interesting to know what evidence for this year is provided by the Mesopotamian inscriptions. Sargon II's main activity for the year 715 BCE was a campaign against Ursa, king of Urartu.<sup>43</sup> Some scholars have suggested a relatively peaceful campaign against southern Palestine in 715 BCE.<sup>44</sup> There is, however, no direct evidence for such a campaign. This does not imply that a campaign as suggested could not have taken place. Some details are known that might argue for the campaign. In 716 BCE the Egyptian king Pir'u paid tribute to Sargon II.<sup>45</sup> In the same year, Sargon II settled Arabs in the newly established Assyrian province of Samerina.<sup>46</sup> In my view the so-called Azeka fragment should be construed as a referring to events in 715 BCE.<sup>47</sup> The text relates the military revenge of an unknown Assyrian ruler

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cond, *Completely Revised and Updated Edition*, London 1993, 250; W.R. Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign to Judah* (SHCANE 18), Leiden 1999, 160-62.

<sup>42</sup> See also Dijkstra, 'Chronological Problems'.

<sup>43</sup> See, e.g.,

1. Sg II Annals from Khorsabad (A. Fuchs, *Die Inschriften Sargons II. aus Khorsabad*, Göttingen 1994, 105-10): 101-120;

2. Sg II Annals 711 (A. Fuchs, *Die Annalen des Jahres 711 v. Chr.* (SAAS 8), Helsinki 1998, 29) III.e: 12'-25'.

See also H. Donner, *Israel unter den Völkern* (VT Sup 11), Leiden 1964, 108; E. Noort, *Die Seevölker in Palästina* (Palaestina Antiqua 8), Kampen 1994, 27-28; Fuchs, *Inschriften*, 381-82.

<sup>44</sup> E.g., Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 54.

<sup>45</sup> Sg II Annals from Khorsabad (Fuchs, *Inschriften*, 110): 123-125.

<sup>46</sup> Sg II Annals from Khorsabad (Fuchs, *Inschriften*, 110): 120-123; see Becking, *Fall of Samaria*, 102-04.

<sup>47</sup> Sg II Azekah fragment (K. 6205 + BM 82-3-23,131; joined by N. Na'aman, 'Sennacherib's "Letter to God" on his Campaign to Judah', *BASOR* 214 (1974), 25-39; recent collations in G. Galil, 'Judah and Assyria in the Sargonic Period', *Zion* 57 (1992), 111-33 [Hebr.]; Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 229-232; M. Cogan, 'Sennacherib', in: *COS* II, 304-05); note that this fragment has been related to:

1. events in 720 BCE: Fuchs, *Sargon*, 314-15; Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 231;

2. in 712 BCE: A. Spalinger, 'The Year 712 B.C. and its Implications for Egyptian History', *JARCE* 10 (1973), 95-101; Vogt, *Aufstand*, 21-23; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), New York 1988, 261-62; S. Timm, *Moab zwischen den Mächten: Studien zu historischen Denkmälern und Texten* (ÄAT 17), Wiesbaden 1989, 337 n. 19, 356 n. 50; Galil, 'Judah and Assyria'; G. Galil, 'Conflicts between Assyrian Vassals', *SAAB* 6 (1992), 61-63; Galil, *Chronology*, 98, 104; Goldberg, 'Two Assyrian Campaigns', 363, and

against Hezekiah, king of Judah. The aim of the campaign seems to have been the strengthening of the border with Egypt. Since Sargon II was occupied with Urartian affairs, it might be possible that a high officer or the crown-prince Sennacherib, who held a high military rank by that time<sup>48</sup>, went to Jerusalem to secure the paying of tribute. In my opinion this action was later claimed as a deed of Sargon II when he says in a Summary inscription that it was:

*mu-šak-niš<sup>kur</sup> Ja-ú-da*<sup>49</sup>

‘He who subjected Judah’

The Š-stem of the verb *kanāšu*, ‘to make subject’, need not refer to a military campaign at all. Na’aman proposed that this inscription should be dated to late 717 or early 716 BCE. This view would make it impossible that the inscription would refer to an event that allegedly took place in 715 BCE.<sup>50</sup> Against Na’aman it should, however, be noted that the inscription under consideration is not dated by a colophon. This implies that the inscription would not refer to an event in 720 BCE as suggested by Na’aman on the basis of his dating of the inscription under consideration.<sup>51</sup> The view elaborated by Winckler and adopted by Vogt, that the Assyrian scribes have simply exchanged the ‘Bruderreiche Israel und Juda’ and that the reference should be construed as another piece of evidence for the conquest of Samaria by Sargon II, is ingenious but not convincing.<sup>52</sup> In 720 BCE Sargon II aimed at the destruction of the coalition under Jaubi’di of Hamath. Nowhere in the inscriptions of Sargon II referring to that campaign a military encounter with Judah is mentioned.<sup>53</sup>

3. in 701 BCE: Na’aman, ‘Sennacherib’s “Letter to God”’; Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis*, 101-02; Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 625; N. Na’aman, ‘Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria’, *TA* 21 (1994), 235, 245-47; W. Mayer, *Politik und Kriegskunst der Assyrier* (ALASPM 9), Münster 1995, 350-51; Laato, ‘Assyrian Propaganda’, 214; Gallagher, *Sennacherib’s Campaign*, 110-12; H. Tadmor, ‘The Campaigns of Sargon II’, *JCS* 12 (1958), 22-40, 77-100.

4. Tadmor, *Inscriptions*; Noort, *Seevölker*, 28; Cogan, ‘Sennacherib’, 304, leave the question of dating this fragment open.

<sup>48</sup> Tadmor, ‘Campaigns of Sargon II’, 78; A.K. Jenkins, ‘Hezekiah’s Fourteenth Year’, *VT* 26 (1976), 296.

<sup>49</sup> Sg II Nimrud Inscription (ed. H. Winckler, *Die Keilschrifttexte Sargons nach dem Papierabklatsche und Originalen neu herausgegeben*, Leipzig 1889), Band II, t 48 = A.H. Layard, *The Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character from Assyrian Monuments*, London 1851, no. 33-34): 8. Translation: Winckler, *Sargon I*, p. 168; *ARAB* II, § 137; K.L. Younger, ‘Sargon II’, in: *COS* II, 298-99.

<sup>50</sup> N. Na’aman, ‘The Historical Portion of Sargon II’s Nimrud Inscription’, *SAAB* 8 (1994), 17-20; see also Tadmor, ‘Campaigns of Sargon II’, 36.

<sup>51</sup> Na’aman, ‘Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria’, 235; Na’aman, ‘Historical Portion’; see also K.L. Younger, ‘Sargon’s Campaign against Jerusalem – A Further Note’, *Bibl* 77 (1996), 108-110.

<sup>52</sup> Winckler, *Sargon I*, vi; Vogt, *Aufstand*, 31-32.

<sup>53</sup> See Becking, *Fall of Samaria*.

## 3.2. Two campaigns

This implies that in the complex chronological problems of Sennacherib's campaign or campaigns against Jerusalem Jenkins basically seems to be right.<sup>54</sup> In my opinion there were 'two campaigns': one in 715 BCE and one in 701 BCE, the second one being well documented in the inscriptions of Sennacherib. Jenkins, however, dates Hezekiah's fourteenth year in 714 BCE and relates the campaign mentioned in 2 Kgs. 18:13 with the expedition of an Assyrian commander-in-chief against rebellious Ashdod, which, however, took place in 712 BCE.<sup>55</sup> In my opinion the "first" campaign, which took place in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, has to be dated in the summer of 715 BCE. If this is correct all the chronological data from 2 Kgs. 18 fall into place.

It should be noted that another two-campaign theory has been promoted. Defenders of this historical reconstruction suppose (1) a campaign by Sennacherib in 701 BCE as a result of which Hezekiah paid a tribute to the Assyrian king and (2) an otherwise unrecorded campaign in about 688 BCE in which the deliverance of Jerusalem took place.<sup>56</sup> This proposal might be an elegant solution for two problems in the account in the Book of Kings:

1. A literary tension: how could the payment of a tribute be reconciled with a divine deliverance?
2. The mention of Tirhaqa, king of Egypt, in 2 Kgs. 19:9 who according to the available evidence would only have been nine years old in 701 BCE.

<sup>54</sup> Jenkins, 'Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year'.

<sup>55</sup> The campaign against Ashdod is referred to in:

1. Sg II Annals (Fuchs, *Sargon*, 123-35, 362):241-254;
2. Sg II Display-Inscription (Fuchs, *Sargon*, 219):90-97;
3. Sg II Display Inscription Room XIV (Fuchs, *Sargon*, 76):9-13;
4. Sg II Inscriptions on the Palace doors (Fuchs, *Sargon*, 262) IV:33;
5. Sg II Bull Inscription (Fuchs, *Sargon*, 63):18;
6. Sg II Annals of 711 (Fuchs, *Annalen* = Sm. 2022 II:14-16; k. 1668b + DT 6, III:1 48; cf. Tadmor, 'Campaigns of Sargon II', 91) VII.b:1-33.
7. Sg II Tang-i Var inscription (ed. G. Frame, 'The Inscription of Sargon II at Tang-i Var', *Or* 68 (1999), 31-57; cf. Younger, 'Sargon II', 199-300):19-21.

See Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrier*, 28-32; Z. Kapera, *The Rebellion of Yamani in Ashdod*, Krakow, 1978; N. Na'aman, R. Zadok, 'Sargon II's Deportations to Israel and Philistia (716-708 B.C.)', *JCS* 40 (1988), 43-44; Timm, *Moab zwischen den Mächten*, 334-337; Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 691-94; Na'aman, 'Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria', 239-40.

Note that Fuchs, *Sargon*, 381-82; Fuchs, *Annalen*, 82-124-131, dates this campaign to Ashdod in 711. In case he is correct a connection between 'Hezekiah's fourteenth year' and the campaign against Ashdod is even more problematic.

<sup>56</sup> The idea goes back to H. Rawlinson in 1864, see L. L. Honor, *Sennacherib's Invasion in Palestine: A Critical Source Study*, New York 1926, 24, and has recently been defended by, e.g., J. Bright, *The History of Israel* (Second edition), London 1972, 296-308; C. van Leeuwen, 'Sanchérib devant Jérusalem', *OTS* 14 (1965), 245-72; W. H. Shea, 'Sennacherib's Second Palestinian Campaign', *JBL* 104 (1985), 401-18; W. H. Shea, 'Jerusalem under Siege: Did Sennacherib Attack Twice?', *BAR* 26/6 (1999), 36-44, 64.



This supposed second campaign, however, has no base in the available historical evidence. A second campaign to the west by Sennacherib is not attested in the written documentation.<sup>57</sup> All in all, this proposal seems very unlikely.<sup>58</sup>

The same holds for the traditional 'one campaign-theory'. According to this view, Hezekiah ascended the throne in Judah in 715/14 BCE. His fourteenth year then has been 701 BCE.<sup>59</sup> This view does not account for the fact that Hezekiah already was in power when the Samaria fell into the hands of the Assyrians.

My chronological calculations lead to a clarification as to the dates of the two campaigns. It should be noted that the outcome cannot be classified as 'objective history'. It is a tentative proposal based on a set of assumptions.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> A campaign against Arabia is mentioned in a Summary Inscription of Sennacherib from Nineveh: Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, T 62: 53'-59'. Both Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal refer to this conquest by Sennacherib of the Arabian stronghold Adumutu; Esarh. Nin F. (R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Esarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* [AfO Beiheft 9], Osnabrück <sup>2</sup>1967, 53) IV:1-5; Ashurbanipal (R. Borger, *Beiträge zur Inschriften werk Assurbanipals: Die Prismenklassen A, B, C = K, D, E, F, G, H, J und T sowie andere Inschriften*, Wiesbaden 1996, 69-70). The supposed campaign is dated tentatively in 690 BCE by Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 7.135. There are no indications whatsoever that this campaign would imply a detour over Jerusalem.

<sup>58</sup> See also the criticism by Jenkins, 'Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year'; C. D. Evans, 'Judah's Foreign Policy from Hezekiah to Josiah', in: *Scripture in Context: Essays on the Comparative Method* (PThMS 34), Pittsburgh 1980, 165-66; K. A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, Supplement*, Warminster 1986, 550; C. Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18-20 und Jer 37-40* (BZAW 187), Berlin-New York 1990, 164; D. B. Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times*, Princeton 1992, 354 n. 165; Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 10.

<sup>59</sup> Strong advocates for this view are, e.g., R. E. Clements, *Isaiah and the Deliverance of Jerusalem: A Study of the Interpretation of Prophecy in the Old Testament* (JSOT Sup 13), Sheffield 1980, 9-27; Vogt, *Aufstand*, 6-77; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 246-51; Sme-lik, *Converting the Past*, 93-128; Na'aman, 'Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria', 236-39; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*. W. G. Dever, 'Archaeology, Material Culture and the Early Monarchical Period in Israel', in: D. V. Edelman, *The Fabric of History: Text, Artifact and Israel's Past* (JSOT Sup 127), Sheffield 1991, 107, interprets the Biblical evidence as if one campaign took place in 714 BCE.

<sup>60</sup> Criticism of this view has been uttered, without argument however, by Evans, 'Judah's Foreign Policy', 165; H. Spieckermann, *Juda unter Assur in der Sargonidenzeit* (FRLANT 129), Göttingen 1982, 347; H.J. Tertel, *Text and Transmission: An Empirical Model for the Literary Development of Old Testament Narratives* (BZAW 221), Berlin-New York 1994, 157.

### 3.3. A chronological framework

The outcome of these considerations is that: 1. Most probably an Assyrian king besieged Jerusalem in 715 BCE; 2. Sennacherib conducted a campaign against Jerusalem in 701 BCE.

Is this an objective history? Are these propositions true? An answer to these questions depends on one's theory of (historical) truth. It should be noted that the testing model used in various sciences to verify or better: falsify hypotheses and propositions by putting a test-implication to the test which procedure is in principle reiteratable. Since time is irreversible, historical propositions and hypotheses cannot be tested this way. As many historians, I would plead for a moderate position between a 'correspondence theory' and a 'coherence theory' of historical truth.<sup>61</sup> The propositions just mentioned are 'true' since they correspond with authentic evidence and are coherent with the general picture I have of the Assyrian expansion in the late eighth century BCE.

## 4. *From chronology to history*

### 4.1. Chronology does not equal history

Chronology, however, does not equal history. Bare bones need muscles on them in order to function. Chronology is a, coherent, set of propositions on dates of events that took place in the past. History is a narrative on the events of the past in which as many as possible pieces of evidence are digested. How do we leap from chronology to history, from source to discourse? It should be noted that this 'leap' runs in a way parallel to the distinction between *histoire événementielle* and *histoire conjoncturelle* as made by Braudel.<sup>62</sup> Chronological data contain propositions on the level of the events, but should be interpreted against a wider horizon to lose their senselessness.

Let me first give an example from the recent past. In July 1914 the Austrian crown prince Ferdinand was shot to death in Sarajevo. This is a chronological proposition that is generally held to be true, since there is correspondence and coherence in it. But what does it mean and why is it important for us to know this proposition? Relations and associations give

<sup>61</sup> See, e.g., N. Rescher, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, Oxford 1973; O. Handlin, *Truth in History*, Cambridge MA, London 1979; W. J. Abraham, *Divine Revelation and the Limits of Historical Criticism*, Oxford 1982; F. R. Ankersmit, *Narrative Logic: A Semantical Analysis of the Historian's Language*, Den Haag 1983; Knauf, 'From History to Interpretation'; R. J. Evans, *In Defence of History*, London 1997, esp. 75-102, 224-53.

<sup>62</sup> F. Braudel, *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II*, Paris 1949; see also Knauf, 'From History to Interpretation', 42-43.

the importance. The untimely death of the prince should be related to the political turmoil of his time and we associate it with the World War I that is generally seen as the result of this incident. Or was this shooting only the last straw in a situation that was heading for war already? In other words the chronological proposition on July 1914 receives significance when seen in a greater framework. This framework is supplied by an evaluation of the available, often biased evidence: German newspapers, diaries of soldiers written in the trenches, minutes from staff meetings etc.<sup>63</sup>

To supply meaning to the chronological statements on 715 and 701 BCE and by doing so to construct an historical narrative and an evaluation of the associations and the evidence related to the statements must be made. Therefore, I will now turn to the Hebrew Bible and the cuneiform texts.

#### 4.2. The Book of Kings as an explanatory history

In 2 Kgs. 18–20, with a parallel in Isa. 36–39,<sup>64</sup> the siege of Jerusalem by Sennacherib is related. Old Testament scholars have assessed the historiographic value of these texts differently.<sup>65</sup> We do not possess objective knowl-

<sup>63</sup> See, e.g., K. Kautsky, *Die deutschen Dokumente zum Kriegsausbruch: Vom Attentat in Sarajevo bis zum Eintreffen der serbischen Antwortnote in Berlin*, Berlin 1927; L. Albertini, *The Origins of the War of 1914* (3 volumes), London 1965–67.

<sup>64</sup> For the relationship with 2 Chron. 32, see, e.g., Tertel, *Text and Transmission*, pp. 156–71; G. N. Knoppers, ‘History and Historiography: The Royal Reforms’, in: M. P. Graham *et al.* (eds.), *The Chronicler as Historian* (JSOT Sup 238), Sheffield 1997, 178–203; G. Vaughn, *Theology, History and Archaeology in the Chronicler’s Account of Hezekiah* (ABS, 4), Atlanta 1999; E. Ben Zvi, ‘Malleability and its Limits: Sennacherib’s Campaign against Judah as a Case-Study’, in: L.L. Grabbe (ed.), *‘Like a Bird in a Cage’: The Invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BCE* (ESHM 4; JSOT Sup 363), Sheffield 2003, 73–105.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g., Van Leeuwen, ‘Sanchérib devant Jérusalem’; B. S. Childs, *Isaiah and the Assyrian Crisis*, London 1967; Clements, *Deliverance*, 9–27; M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer neu-assyrischer Darstellung* (AOAT 26), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1975, 42–53; S. Stohlmann, ‘The Judaeon Exile after 701 B.C.E.’, in: W.W. Hallo *et al.* (eds.), *Scripture in Context II*, Winona Lake 1983, 147–75; Shea, ‘Sennacherib’s Second Palestinian Campaign’, 410–418; A. van der Kooij, ‘Das Assyrische Heer vor den Mauern Jerusalems im Jahr 701 v. Chr.’, *ZDPV* 102 (1986), 93–109; Vogt, *Aufstand*; A. Laato, ‘Hezekiah and the Assyrian Crisis in 701 B.C.’, *SJOT* 2 (1987), 49–68; I. W. Prowan, *Hezekiah and the Book of Kings: A Contribution to the Debate of the deuteronomistic History* (BZAW 172), Berlin-New York 1988; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 223–52; Hardmeier, *Prophezie im Streit*; E. Ruprecht, ‘Die ursprüngliche Komposition der Hiskia-Jesaja Erzählungen und ihre Umstrukturierung durch den Verfasser des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk’, *ZThK* 87 (1990), 33–66; S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 101–109; N. Na’aman, ‘Forced Participation in Alliances in the Course of Assyrian Campaigns to the West’, in: M. Cogan, I. Eph’al (eds.), *Ah Assyria! Studies in Assyrian History and Ancient Near Eastern Historiography Presented to Hayim Tadmor* (Scripta Hierosolymata 33), Jerusalem 1991, 94–96; Smelik, *Converting the Past*, 123–128; Laato, ‘Assyrian Propaganda’; Gallagher, *Sennacherib*.

edge on the emergence or on the date of the final composition of these texts. I do not have space here to present a full discussion of these themes. I confine myself to my personal view, which, I assume, is shared, at least at some points, by some colleagues, but challenged by others.

With Williamson, I suppose that the account in the Book of Isaiah has been taken over at some point in history from the traditions that lead to the Book of Kings.<sup>66</sup>

The account in 2 Kgs. 18–20 in its final form is part of the so-called Deuteronomistic History. I am, still, of the opinion that this composition should be dated in the early years of the ‘exilic’ period<sup>67</sup> and should be seen as an explanatory history.<sup>68</sup> The aim of DtrH is not to satisfy modern historians with eyewitness reports of events from Iron Age Judah and Israel, but to help a distressed people to cope with the reality of exile, lost independence and a torn down temple. Reading 2 Kgs. 18–20, with its antagonism, e.g., between the faith of Hezekiah and the transgressions of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom; the death of Sennacherib and the recovery of Hezekiah from a deadly illness, against this ‘exilic’ background is a hermeneutical enterprise and does only supply ‘historical’ information at the level of *Ideengeschichte*.<sup>69</sup>

The authors, or composers, of DtrH have used older material. With Christof Hardmeier, I assume that they have incorporated material from the ‘Erzählung von der Assyrischen Bedrohung und der Befreiung Jerusalems’.<sup>70</sup> This ABBJ as a literary and explanatory composition too. Its author does not suggest two Assyrian campaigns against Judah. He is telling a story, using and reworking older material, to his contemporaries. A literary analysis of ABBJ yields the picture that the narrator has built in an element of complication: After Hezekiah’s payment of tribute an Assyrian withdrawal is expected but it does not take place immediately: Other things have to happen first. Hardmeier argues that the final years before the fall of Jerusalem to the Babylonians should be seen as the historical context of the ABBJ narrative. On the level of historical reconstruction it should be noted that a temporary withdrawal by the Babylonian forces in 588 BCE was provoked by a march of Egyptian troops to relieve the beleaguered Judaeian capital.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>66</sup> H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction*, Oxford 1995, 189–209.

<sup>67</sup> On the ‘exilic’ period see B. Becking, ‘Babylonisches Exil’, in: *RGG*<sup>4</sup>, I, 1044–1045; and the essays in L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Leading Captivity Captive: The ‘Exile’ as History and Tradition* (ESHM 2; JSOT Sup 278), Sheffield 1998.

<sup>68</sup> See, e.g., Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 292–321. The reader is supposed to easily find a way to the abundance of literature on the ‘deuteronomistic’ problem and its perplexity.

<sup>69</sup> A nice effort to read 2 Kgs. 18–19 has been proposed by A. van der Kooij, ‘The Story of Hezekiah and Sennacherib (2 Kings 18–19): A Sample of Ancient Historiography’, in: De Moor, Van Rooij (eds.), *Past, Present, Future*, 107–19.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Account on the Assyrian Siege and on the Deliverance of Jerusalem’.

<sup>71</sup> Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit*.

This implies that the historical propositions present in ABBJ cannot simply be transported to a situation at the end of the eighth century BCE. The mention of Tirhaqa, King of Egypt, in 2 Kgs. 19:9 is a good example. The name was known from the oral or written traditions that were at the disposal of the author of ABBJ. Within the composition this name functions as a *chiffre* for Pharaoh Apries who ruled over Egypt in the early sixth century BCE.<sup>72</sup> This implies that the ABBJ narrative too only supplies 'historical' information at the level of *Ideengeschichte*.

Is ABBJ based on sources and are they eventually to be reconstructed? This is a simple question, that is, however, not easy to be answered. It is very plausible that the composer of ABBJ had various sources at his disposal. It is, however, impossible to reconstruct them. This implies that I do not agree with the solution of Brevard Childs who construes three sources behind 2 Kgs. 18–20: A, B1 and B2.<sup>73</sup> But even if it turns out that Childs is correct, it should be noted that his sources in fact are discourses. They are, later, perceptions of the event(s) and do not equal 'what really happened'.<sup>74</sup>

It can be observed that 2 Kgs. 18–20 does not explicitly state that Jerusalem was besieged twice. This observation is not to be assessed as an argument against the view that two military operations have been conducted. As with the two campaigns against Samaria, the two campaigns against Jerusalem have been telescoped by tradition into one narrative.<sup>75</sup> It is apparent that two traditions are present in 2 Kgs. 18–20. 2 Kgs. 18:14–16 narrates a buying off of a siege by presenting a tribute, while 2 Kgs. 19:35–36 states that the angel of YHWH caused the death of 185,000 Assyrians overnight which urged the Assyrian king to retreat. It is an almost defiant challenge to distribute these two causes of Assyrian retreat over the two campaigns assumed.<sup>76</sup> This, however, is impossible on the basis of the Hebrew Bible alone.

<sup>72</sup> Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit*, 327.

<sup>73</sup> Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*; adopted by many scholars. See the criticism in Smelik, *Converting the Past*, 93–128, esp. 124.

<sup>74</sup> See, e.g., Clements, *Deliverance*; Smelik, *Converting the Past*, 93–128.

<sup>75</sup> See also Younger, 'Deportations of the Israelites'; Dijkstra, 'Chronological problems'.

<sup>76</sup> Jenkins, 'Hezekiah's Fourteenth Year', relates to 2 Kgs. 18:17–19:37 (sources B1 and B2) with the 'first' campaign, while 2 Kgs. 18:4–16 would refer to 701 BCE, while Goldberg, 'Two Assyrian Campaigns', takes the opposite view: 2 Kgs. 18:14–16 would refer to events in 712 BCE while behind the traditions in 2 Kgs. 18:17–19:37 reminiscences to 701 BCE are to be assumed.

Finally, at all the stages of its supposed development the story or stories in 2 Kgs. 18–20 should be construed as explanatory history. The text(s) explain how things that were observable to its readership has come into being. The explanation(s) given are related to the symbol system of the authors. They are in a way the muscles to the bare bones, that could have been shaped in other forms.

#### 4.3. Annals as royal glorification

The inscriptions of Sennacherib mentioning the siege of Jerusalem should also not be assessed as sources but as discourses. In several inscriptions the siege of Jerusalem is mentioned:<sup>77</sup>

Rassam Cylinder	T 4 <sup>78</sup>	700 BCE	:32-58
K 2627 <sup>+</sup>	T 171 <sup>79</sup>	?	:15-Rev.:21
Heidel/King Prism	T 12 <sup>80</sup>	694 BCE	II:60-IV:9
Chicago or Taylor Prism	T 16 <sup>81</sup>	691-89 BCE	II:37-III:49

Although there are differences between these inscriptions, the deviations are not that great as in the various reports on Sennacherib's first campaign.<sup>82</sup> Therefore I will confine my analysis to one text. It should be noted that summarizing accounts are present in the following inscriptions:

Bull 2//3	T 26//27 <sup>83</sup>	?	:17-22
Bull 4	T 29 <sup>84</sup>	?	:18-32
Nebi Yunus Inscription	T 61 <sup>85</sup>	± 690 BCE	:13-15
BM 134496 <sup>+</sup>	T 172 <sup>86</sup>	?	:1'-Rev.:8
K 2625 <sup>+</sup>	T 173 <sup>87</sup>	?	:1'

I will confine myself to one text here. The Rassam Cylinder can be seen as an authentic report on the event. It is, however, also a discourse. Gallagher has collected some cases that make clear that the military report is moulded in literary, or even artistic language. Next to the well-known simile 'like a bird in a cage' for the position of Hezekiah in a city surrounded with armies, he points at the parallel for the expression *šā'alu kakkīšun*, 'to

<sup>77</sup> See the outline in Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 6.

<sup>78</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 47-61; recent translation by Cogan, 'Sennacherib', 302-03.

<sup>79</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 199-201; the inscription is parallel to the Rassam-cylinder.

<sup>80</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 87-89.

<sup>81</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 102-05.

<sup>82</sup> See Tertel, *Text and Transmission*, 67-96.

<sup>83</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 115-16.

<sup>84</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 116-18.

<sup>85</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 128-29.

<sup>86</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 201-02.

<sup>87</sup> Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 202-06.

sharpen their weapons', in Enuma Elish IV:92.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile the text is full of ideology. Several expressions are related to the terminology of treaties and loyalty-oaths. Other elements function as a glorification of the Assyrian king in his role as defender and maintainer of the cosmic order on earth. The king is represented as instrumental for the *Schreckenglanz* of Ashur. These features imply that the text should be analysed carefully when inferring references to events from it. The following information can be deduced:

1. After military operations against Sidon,<sup>89</sup> Ashkelon<sup>90</sup> and Ekron,<sup>91</sup> Sennacherib heads for Jerusalem.
2. Sennacherib attacks Jerusalem since Hezekiah subjected Padi, the former king of Ekron and a vassal of Assyria who had been thrown in chains by the people and the rulers of Ekron.<sup>92</sup> Sennacherib obviously wanted to liberate his former vassal.
3. Sennacherib captured a great number of cities and strongholds. He distributes the territory under his loyal vassals Mitinti of Ashkelon, Padi of Ekron and Silbel of Gaza. In a counterbalance, he raises the amount of their yearly payment.
4. Sennacherib besieged Jerusalem. Hezekiah is locked 'like a bird in a cage'.
5. A capture of Jerusalem is not narrated. With the glorification-language of the annals as a background, this can be interpreted as a sign that Sennacherib for one reason or another did not defeat Hezekiah.
6. Sennacherib received a heavy tribute from Hezekiah that was sent to Nineveh after the campaign.<sup>93</sup>
7. A reason for this tribute is not narrated except for the fact that Hezekiah was overwhelmed by the radiant splendour of Sennacherib's lordship. The political outcome of the tribute also is not mentioned.

The picture arising from the report in the Annals is, that Sennacherib attacked Hezekiah with the purpose to release his former vassal Padi of Ekron.

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<sup>88</sup> Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 121, 133.

<sup>89</sup> Rassam: 32-35; see Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 91-104.

<sup>90</sup> Rassam: 39-41; see Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 117-19.

<sup>91</sup> Rassam: 42-48; see Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 120-27.

<sup>92</sup> Rassam: 42.

<sup>93</sup> Rassam: 55-58.

### 5. History: a proposed construction

#### 5.1. Something happened in Jerusalem

It is the task of the historian not only to analyse the evidence but also to present a picture of his reconstruction of the past. Therefore, the next step in this paper will be a preliminary proposal. In my view the evidence from the Annals of Sennacherib can easily be reconciled with the narrative in 2 Kgs. 18:13b-16.<sup>94</sup>

1. Both texts relate a Judean tribute. The extent of the tribute is basically the same in the two pieces of evidence. Both texts relate the payment of 30 talents of gold. The amount of silver seems to be contradictory. Sennacherib mentions 800 talents, while 2 Kgs. 18:14 relates that 300 talents were paid. Several explanations for the diverging numbers have been given: (a) the Assyrian talent of silver would have been 3/8 as large as the Judean;<sup>95</sup> (b) the Assyrian quantity would include silver stripped from the doors of the temple, the Biblical quantity would not.<sup>96</sup> I would prefer the interpretation of Mayer who argues that the number 800 in the Rassam Cylinder does not refer to the weight of silver alone, but should be taken as an indication of the total amount of goods enumerated in the inscription (silver, choice antimony, large blocks of carnelian, beds [inlaid] with ivory, etc. etc), while the number 300 in 2 Kgs. 18:14 only would refer to the amount of silver in the tribute.<sup>97</sup>
2. Both texts mention the conquest of many Judean cities.<sup>98</sup>
3. Both texts imply the retreat of the Assyrian king.

According to Van Seters, 2 Kgs. 18:(13)14-16 should be assessed as deriving from official records. By implication the evidence is trustworthy.<sup>99</sup> By relating it to the chronological evidence inferred from the Mesopotamian inscriptions, I would like to date this event in 701 BCE. Hezekiah has

<sup>94</sup> Pace Dever, 'Archaeology, Material Culture and the Early Monarchical Period in Israel'; C. R. Seitz, 'Account A and the Annals of Sennacherib: A Reassessment', *JSOT* 58 (1993), 50-52; Goldberg, 'Two Assyrian Campaigns'.

<sup>95</sup> H. H. Rowley, 'Hezekiah's Reform and Rebellion', *BJRL* 44 (1961-62), 432; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 229.

<sup>96</sup> Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 229.

<sup>97</sup> Mayer, *Politik und Kriegskunst*, 360-63.

<sup>98</sup> 2 Kgs. 18:13b; Rassam:56.

<sup>99</sup> Childs, *Assyrian Crisis*, 68-73; Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 301; Vogt, *Aufstand*, 24-33; Clements, *Deliverance*, 9-27; see even Smelik, *Converting the Past*, 124. Camp, *Hiskija und Hiskijabild*, 105, nevertheless assumes a complex redaction historical process of the textual unit under consideration.



often been presented as the leader of the anti-Assyrian coalition.<sup>100</sup> For this view no argument is given. There is no evidence in written sources that Hezekiah took the lead in a coalition. This view must be abandoned as based on scholarly prejudice. Although Sennacherib apparently did not conquer Jerusalem, Hezekiah presented him a heavy tribute. As a result of that the Assyrian king withdrew. I am of the opinion that the tribute not only was meant to buy off the siege of the city, but also to regain control over the areas occupied by Sennacherib and distributed over the Philistine kings. In the seventh century BCE there are no indications, that the territory of Judah was confined to Jerusalem and its immediate surroundings. The archaeological evidence hints at a continuation of Jerusalemite control over the Judean countryside.<sup>101</sup> The evidence of the paleo-Hebrew inscriptions excavated at various Judean sites (e.g. Tel Arad, Khirbet Beit Lei, Khirbet el-Qom, Mešad Hashavyahu) stands contrary to the idea that the area has been made Philistine territory.

As regards 2 Kgs. 18:13a.17-19:37, things are more complicated. I assume a complex history of tradition, which implies that many details in the present story are not original and cannot be, used as historical evidence. I further assume that the core of the narrative should be related to events 'in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah', in my view 715 BCE. I don't think that it is possible to reconstruct the text of the original report. Important elements in this report might have been:

1. The campaign against Jerusalem was conducted not by the king of Assyria, but by an officer of high military rank.
2. The king of Assyria was in the meantime waging war against Egypt.
3. The representative of the Assyrian king did not succeed in conquering Jerusalem.
4. The representative of the Assyrian king did not succeed in surrendering Jerusalem by negotiations.
5. The Assyrian army had to withdraw due to unexpected massive deaths of soldiers. In 2 Kgs. 19:35 this feature is interpreted as a result of divine intervention.

<sup>100</sup> E.g., by Redford, *Egypt, Canaan and Israel*, 351; Vogt, *Aufstand*, 6-9; Na'aman, 'Forced Participation', 94; Na'aman, 'Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria', 248; Soggin, *History*, 249; Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 695-96; R. Lamprichs, *Die Westexpansion des neuassyrischen Reiches: Eine Strukturanalyse* (AOAT 239), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1995, 147-49; Noort, *Seevölker*, 28; Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, esp. 110-12, 263-74.

<sup>101</sup> See basically H. Weippert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (Handbuch der Archäologie II, 1), München 1988, 559-681; Ahlström, *History of Ancient Palestine*, 716-40, and the relevant entries in E. Stern (ed.), *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1993.

The Assyrian inscriptions mentioned above relate a relatively peaceful campaign against southern Palestine with its goal the strengthening of the border with Egypt. In the so-called Azeka fragment the following remark is made:

11' [the city of ?<sup>102</sup>] a royal [city] of the Philistines that H[ezek]iah had captured and strengthened for himself [...]

This remark might be seen as coinciding with a note in 2 Kgs. 18:8:

He [= Hezekiah] defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its border areas, from watchtower to fortified city.<sup>103</sup>

This gives in mind the idea that the military action against Jerusalem in Hezekiah's fourteenth year was intended to punish the Judaeen king for an act of violence against a Philistine city that had been an Assyrian vassal for several years. Assyrian kings had the obligation to defend their vassals against foreign powers. Since an action against Jerusalem was not the main goal of the campaign in 715 BCE, it is probable that this 'side campaign' was conducted by an officer of high rank, if not by the crown prince himself.

In his explanation of 2 Kgs. 19:35, Gallagher has elaborated the traditional idea that the theological language of this verse masks the reminiscence to a historical event: an epidemic plague that took the life of many Assyrian soldiers.<sup>104</sup> Gallagher supposes the event took place in 701 BCE. A plague is known to have occurred in Mesopotamia in 707 BCE.<sup>105</sup> Neither for 715 nor for 701 a plague is attested. The absence of evidence is, however, not the evidence of absence. A sudden spread of a lethal disease could explain the tradition.

<sup>102</sup> Na'aman, 'Sennacherib's "Letter to God"', 27, originally read Gath; see also Vogt, *Aufstand*, 21-23; Laato, 'Assyrian Propaganda', 214. S. Mittmann, 'Hiskia und die Philister', *JNSL* 16 (1990), 89-99; Na'aman, 'Hezekiah and the Kings of Assyria', 245; Galil, 'Judah and Assyria', prefer Ekron. Noort, *Seevölker*, 28; Frahm, *Sanherib-Inschriften*, 230; Cogan, 'Sennacherib', 304, are undecided.

<sup>103</sup> Pace Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 217, 220-21; Soggin, *History*, 250; Laato, 'Assyrian Propaganda', 214; Lamprichs, *Westexpansion*, 148, who relate this remark to exploits by Hezekiah in the years before 701 BCE. A. H. J. Gunneweg, *Geschichte Israels bis Bar Kochba* (ThW 2), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln <sup>3</sup>1979, 118; Camp, *Hiskija und Hiskijabild*, 90-91, offered the view that 2 Kgs. 18:8 would refer to events after the third campaign when Hezekiah was recapturing the territory handed over by Sennacherib to some Philistine kings. On the basis of the Assyrian evidence it can be concluded that Judah has been a faithful and loyal vassal. A military exploit as suggested by Gunneweg and Camp stands contrary with this view.

<sup>104</sup> Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 241-52.

<sup>105</sup> Babylonian Chronicle I ii:5; Grayson, *Chronicles*, 76. The disease probably reached as far west as Damascus and Ribla, see the letters *SAA* I 171:14; 180:e11'; with Gallagher, *Sennacherib's Campaign*, 267.

### 5.2. The wider framework

Is objective history writing possible? How helpful is chronology? At the end of my exercise, I would like to say that there is (some) objectivity in history writing, but only on the small and well-defined scale of chronological data. They form the backbone of our reconstruction of the past. But as such, they are quite meaningless. Like a word outside a phrase has no meaning, a historical 'datum' – how true and objective it may be – makes no sense. The albeit superfluous analysis of the Assyrian and Biblical

narratives has provided some flesh on the skeleton. Two things, however, should be kept in mind:

1. The flesh on the bones is tentative. It has been put there with the help of the imagination of the historian. This also implies that on the same skeleton different arrangements can be made.
2. A wider framework is needed. As in the case of the assassination of the Austrian crown prince Ferdinand in Sarajevo, the data on 715 and 701 BCE and the narrative(s) related to them only make sense, when they are related to a broader historical framework. To say the same in Braudelian terminology: the between *histoire événementielle* can only be understood when seen as part of a *histoire conjoncturelle*. This framework would consist in an analysis of the political, military and economic movements in the ancient Near East during the Sargonid Empire. The monograph by Lamprichs supplies good material and should be seen as a starting point for writing such a wider framework.<sup>106</sup>

### 5.3. The subjective historian

Reconstructing history is an ambivalent form of art, since it is both scholarly and subjective. The person of the historian is always involved. Rereading the remarks above, I have been asking myself in which parts my personal view was too dominant. Where did I pass the limits of objectivity? Where did I leave the dimension of the 'happening-truth' and entered the field of the 'story-truth'? This question should not be misunderstood, since two different ways of subjectivity are involved that should not be confused:

1. Subjectivity at the level of values and ideology;
2. Subjectivity at the level of perception. *Esse est percipi*.<sup>107</sup> I can only talk about the reality outside as I perceive it in my mind.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Lamprichs, *Westexpansion*.

<sup>107</sup> George Berkeley, 'A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge, § 3 (1710)', in: A. A. Luce, T. E. Jessop (eds.), *The Works of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne*, Oxford 1948-1957, Vol. 2, 42.

As to the first form, I have tried to avoid a biased position, for instance by not putting Hezekiah as the pivotal point in all the events as has so often been done by Biblical scholars. But did I succeed? It is, I assume, up to the reader of this paper to determine how much of my personal views on war and piece can be detected.

As to the second form, the scarcity of evidence yields, by implication, that my perception is limited as well as guided by the narratives of the ancients, subjective in the first sense of the idea as they are. By looking at the evidence from various angles and by weighing as careful as possible the information supplied, I have tried to overcome subjectivity and to reach a discourse that is open to inter-subjectivity. In the end, history-writing – not only of the ‘Biblical period’ – will remain an art, although based on science.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> See, e.g., K. Mannheim, *Wissenssoziologie: Auswahl aus dem Werk*, Neuwied 1970.

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g., Evans, *Defence of History*, esp. 45-74.

## Chapter IX: Gedaliah and Baalis in History and as Tradition: Remarks on 2 Kings 25:22-26, Jeremiah 40:7–41:15, and Two Ammonite Seal-Inscriptions<sup>\*</sup>

### *1. Introduction*

The Book of Kings narrates that after the conquest of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, a certain Gedaliah had been appointed as governor in Mizpa.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, he was assassinated soon<sup>2</sup> after his appointment. Within the composition of the Book of Kings, his untimely death functions as a sign of despair underscoring the tragic fate of Judah. Whether or not this sign of despair is mirrored by a sign of hope, the amnesty of Jehojachin, will be discussed in chapter 10. In this chapter the plausibility of the historicity of the Gedaliah incident will be discussed in the wider framework of the question of the character of the historical reliability of biblical sources.

### *2. Can a history of Israel be written?*

Is it still possible to write a history of Israel? Would the Hebrew Bible play a role in such a history? My answer to this question would be positive but depends on three features:

1. What is meant by 'Israel'?
2. What is meant by 'history-writing'? and
3. How is the OT text used as a historical source?

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<sup>\*</sup> This chapter is based on three previous publications: B. Becking, 'Baalis, the King of the Ammonites. An epigraphical remark on Jeremiah 40:14', *JSS* 38 (1993), 15-24; B. Becking, 'Inscribed Seals as Historical Sources for "Ancient Israel"? Jeremiah 40:7-41:15 *par exemple*', in: L. L. Grabbe (ed.), *Can a 'History of Israel' be Written?* (ESHM 1; JSOT Sup 245), Sheffield 1997, 65-83; B. Becking, 'The Seal of Baalisha, King of the Ammonites. Some Remarks', *BN* 97 (1999), 13-17.

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kgs. 25:22-26; with a parallel in Jer. 40:7-41:15. For archaeological evidence on Mizpa as an administrative centre in the "Exilic" era see O. Lipschits, 'Demographic Changes in Judah between the Seventh and the Sixth Centuries B.C.E.', in: O. Lipschits, J. Blenkinsopp (eds.), *Judah and the Judeans in the Neo-Babylonian Period*, Winona Lake 2003, 323-76; K. Koenen, *Bethel: Geschichte, Kult und Theologie* (OBO 192), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 2003, 59-64.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew Bible does not give a hint as to the duration of his governorship. It is, however, an acceptable surmise that his reign did not last for years; see most recently R. Albertz, *Die Exilszeit: 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (BibEnz 7), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 2001, 83.

### 2.1. 'Ancient' or ancient Israel?

When Israel is construed as a political or ethnic term, many confusions arise as has been made clear by Philip Davies.<sup>3</sup> Interpreting the population of the central hill country during Iron Age I as Israelites, for instance, is premature according to Davies.<sup>4</sup> Using Israel as a political term would exclude the kingdom of Judah and confine the historical enterprise to the rather limited period of the existence of the Northern Kingdom. Therefore, when Israel is taken as a geographical term, my answer to the first question would be a firm and definite 'yes': It is possible to write a history of events and processes that took place in the area from the beginning up to the turn of the era, though it might politically be correct to speak about the history of ancient Palestine.<sup>5</sup>

### 2.2. Historiography on the move

The enterprise of this historical (re)construction should be carried out normally as if it were a historical (re)construction of whatever period or people. It belongs to the legacy of Biblical history writing that such a sentence has to be phrased. Although history-writing in general can be and has been abused for ideological purposes, this is especially the case when it comes to the question of the historicity of the traditions collected in the Old Testament. Both (traditional Christian) faith (or the lack of it) and various kinds of territorial claims have played the role of a hidden agenda in the process of the reconstruction of the history of Israel. This point can be clarified by referring to Huizinga's definition of history: 'History is the form in which a civilization accounts for its past.' This clause is famous and also ambiguous especially when it comes to the reconstruction of the history of ancient Israel/Palestine. The question is: whose civilization? Our's? The civilization of Iron Age and/or Persian period Israel? In case the last option is meant, the question arises: Should the Deuteronomistic History not be considered as a form in which an exilic or post-exilic community accounted for its past? In that view the biblical texts are a clear form of history-writing. In some sense of the word the Deuteronomists

<sup>3</sup> P.R. Davies, *In Search of 'Ancient Israel'* (JSOT Sup 148), Sheffield <sup>2</sup>1995, 47-56.

<sup>4</sup> See, however, the arguments and the evidence in W. G. Dever, *What Did the Biblical Writers Know and When Did They Know It?*, Grand Rapids 2001, 97-157.

<sup>5</sup> See for this view, e.g., K. W. Whitelam, *The Invention of Ancient Israel: The Silencing of Palestinian History*, London-New York 1996, and the remarks by N. P. Lemche, 'Clio is also among the Muses! Keith W. Whitelam and the History of Palestine: A Review and a Commentary', *SJOT* 10 (1996), esp. 113-114; N. P. Lemche, *The Israelites in History and Tradition*, London 1998; T. L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, London 1999.

were the first historians.<sup>6</sup> In case the first option is meant, several approaches are possible as is clear from the variety of books in the *Gattung* 'A History of Israel'. But one way or the other, when we want to account for the Jewish part of the foundations of the European civilization, a critical stand is needed. Problems arise when the two options are conflated. This happens when the history of ancient Israel is described as if it were in every dimension a part of our past. The concepts 'biblical Israel' and 'historical Israel', to use the terminology coined by Philip Davies, are conflated in the hybrid 'ancient Israel'.<sup>7</sup> The clearest example of this confusion and conflation still is the volume by Bright written in an emic mode.<sup>8</sup> In view of these ambiguities, I think that the definition of Huizinga will no longer provide a methodical basis for the writing of a 'history of ancient Israel/Palestine'.

A more solid base can be found in the philosophy of history of R.G. Collingwood.<sup>9</sup> The main point in Collingwood's approach is the search for a way out of the dilemma between 'realism' and 'scepticism'. This antagonism differs from the debate between 'maximalists' and 'minimalists'. The antagonism 'realism' versus 'scepticism' has to do with the nature of historical knowledge and not so much with the question whether a source is to be evaluated as reliable in giving information on the past. 'Realism' supposes that the past is an objective reality. Knowledge of the past can be reached analogously as knowledge of the present can be reached. 'Realism' thus denies the categorical difference between past and present. 'Scepticism' is related to a basic mistrust in the knowability of the past. A scepticist only reckons with entities that are present. A final consequence of this sceptical position would be that it is impossible to do history. Collingwood tries to overcome this dilemma by elaborating a view on the character of so-called historical sources. These traces of the past are available and knowable in the present. It is possible to go to the British Museum, for instance, and ask for clay tablets. These traces are not the past as such. All the historian has in hand is the evidence mirroring the past. The evidence makes it possible to know the past but only in a restricted way. The task of the historian is to collect the evidence and then construct a personal image of the past. In this reconstruction models and imagination play a role. The

<sup>6</sup> This is, as such, the strong point in the argument of B. Halpern, *The First Historians: The Hebrew Bible and History*, San Francisco 1988; see also J.-L. Ska, 'L'histoire d'Israël de Martin Noth à nos jours: Problèmes de méthode', in: J.-M. Poffet (ed.), *Comment la Bible saisit-elle l'histoire?* (Lectio Divina 215), Paris 2007, 38-41.

<sup>7</sup> Davies, 'Ancient Israel'.

<sup>8</sup> J. Bright, *A History of Israel*, Philadelphia 1981; see now the essays in V. P. Long, D. W. Baker, G. J. Wenham (eds.), *Windows into Old Testament History. Evidence, Argument and the Crisis of 'Biblical Israel'*, Grand Rapids, Cambridge UK 2002; I. W. Provan, V. P. Long, T. Longman, *A Biblical History of Israel*, Louisville 2003.

<sup>9</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History: Revised Edition with Lectures 1926-1928*, Oxford 1994.

historian cannot do without metaphorical language. Collingwood is very much aware of the subjective character of such a reconstruction. Here, some criticism to two models present in the field is needed. The first model for historical reconstruction is summarized in the often quoted phrase of Gerhard von Rad: “Die historische Forschung sucht ein kritisch gesichertes Minimum; das kerygmatische Bild tendiert nach einem theologischen Maximum”.<sup>10</sup> The use of the noun ‘gesichertes’ hints at the fact that Von Rad too was to some degree aware of the subjective character of any historical reconstruction. He fails, however, to see that the only thing that is certain is the available evidence. The sketch he is giving of the history of Yahwistic faith in biblical times<sup>11</sup> is much more than a mere exposition of evidence, it is a historical reconstruction in which Von Rad’s own faith often operates as a model for understanding. On the other hand, a reconstruction of the kerygmatic image of the Old Testament should also be based on evidence. The second model to be criticized is to be found in a more recent thought-provoking monograph by Philip Davies. He, correctly, sees ‘ancient Israel’ as a product of the mind of biblical scholars. He fails to see, however, that what he calls ‘historical Israel’ is a product of the mind too. In his interesting and informative chapter on ‘historical Israel’ he is using the language of realism. Here, he is searching for what was ‘really there’. In fact, however, he is using archaeological remains, cuneiform inscriptions etc. as evidence on which he builds his own reconstruction of Iron Age Palestine.<sup>12</sup>

This implies that history writing is not an objective science. Two remarks should be made here:

1. The non-repeatability of the events. A scientist can repeat an experiment. We are not in the position to ask the Assyrians to conquer Samaria again and give us the correct date or dates. We have to deal with the existing traces. A detective pursuing a murder inquiry is even better off than a historian, since this police officer is in a position to check eye-witness reports.
2. There is always the person of the historian who deals with the existing evidence. Apart from social biases and personal interests, the historian is always a subjective interpreter who is relating data. Would historian A relate date (1) with date (2), historian B relates (1) with (3); etc. These kind of small scale differences or preference will lead to large-scale differences when it comes to reconstruction. This can easily be shown by referring to the discussion on the interpretation of the Tel Dan

<sup>10</sup> G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels*, München <sup>6</sup>1969, 120; with the remarks by Ska, ‘Histoire d’Israël de Martin Noth à nos jours’, 22-33.

<sup>11</sup> Von Rad, *Theologie*, 1-115.

<sup>12</sup> Davies, ‘Ancient Israel’, 57-71.



inscription(s).<sup>13</sup> On a methodological level, it is here that the discussion between ‘maximalists’ and ‘minimalists’ is at home.

Do these observations imply that ‘anything goes’? Is any reconstruction of the past a possibility that should be considered? No! History writing should be based on an ongoing discussion or even debate that has as its aim intersubjective knowledge of the past. This implies that I cannot defend my position or reconstruction by merely saying ‘Well, that is the way it is, that is how I feel it must have taken place.’ Personal insights and subjective reconstructions should be related to the rules of the game, so that other scholars can at least react to it. These rules are, amongst others:

1. proper classification of the evidence available into primary source, secondary source etc.;
2. appropriate treatment of archaeological and epigraphic material; this implies a sound stratigraphic analysis and a paleographic discussion of inscriptions before constructing extensive historical conclusions;
3. making explicitly the implicit suppositions on time, space and society, in which the event or the process had taken place.

### 2.3. Source as a mistaken metaphor

After having discussed the question what should be meant by the two ideas ‘Israel’ and ‘history writing’ a remark on the Old Testament text as a historical source should be made. The metaphor ‘source’ – though used widely – is as such misleading, since it yields the image of a well from which historical information is constantly flowing. In my view the Old Testament text should be treated as evidence. The Old Testament supplies its readers with a diversity of traces of the past that are one way or another mirroring the past. These traces can be and have been treated differently. The difference in the treatment is mostly related to the ideology of the historian, be it minimalistic or maximalistic or something in between. I do not think that a theoretical discussion is fruitful here. This statement does not imply that I stand opposite to theoretical discussion. How I would like to deal with the evidence from the Old Testament will be shown in an example.

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<sup>13</sup> On the Tel Dan Inscription see chapter 3 above with G. Athas, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Reappraisal and a New Interpretation* (JSOT Sup 360), Sheffield 2003; H. Hagelia, *The Tel Dan Inscription: A Critical Investigation of Recent Research on its Palaeography and Philology* (Studia Semitica Uppsalsensia 22), Uppsala 2006. A volume of essays on the debate about the Tel Dan Inscription(s) to be edited by the late Fred C. Cryer, unfortunately did not appear.

### 3. *The Gedaliah incident as Biblical tradition*

Jer. 40:7–41:15 relates the assassination of Gedaliah who was appointed by the Babylonian overlord Nebuchadnezzar as governor<sup>14</sup> over the Judaeans remaining in Judah after the conquest of the city of Jerusalem. The full and detailed story in Jeremiah has a parallel in the short report in 2 Kgs. 25:22–26. In 2 Kgs. only the core of the narration is related while in Jeremiah various details are given. I see four main differences between the two textual units:

1. In Jeremiah a great number of names are given of the persons involved in the incident. In 2 Kings only the main characters are known by name.
2. Jeremiah relates about a temporary emigration to various territories among whom Ammon, Edom and Moab are mentioned by name. This detail is absent in 2 Kings.
3. The author of the Book of Jeremiah informs us about the political background of the assassination of Gedaliah. Johanan the son of Kareah, with the chiefs of the army, is said to have informed Gedaliah about his coming fate: “Do you know, that Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael, the son of Nethanyahu, in order to make an end to your life?”<sup>15</sup>
4. Finally, Jeremiah relates the slaughtering by Ishmael of a group of pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem.

Surprisingly, the Gedaliah incident is not mentioned in 2 Chronicles. A remark in Josephus, *Ant.* X 9.7, on the deportation of Ammonites in the 23rd year of Nebuchadnezzar is seen as the Babylonian answer to the assassination of Gedaliah.<sup>16</sup> Are these reports reliable and who is relying on who?

2 Kgs. 25:22–26 has generally been considered as part of DtrH. In view of the religious character of this composition, DtrH cannot be viewed as a primary historical source. Its framework might contain reliable historical data, though. Nicholson<sup>17</sup> and Seitz<sup>18</sup>, among others, noted an interesting

<sup>14</sup> J. Middlemas, *The Troubles of Templeless Judah* (Oxford Theological Monographs), Oxford 2005, 30–31, 63, correctly argues, that in the Biblical account no word for ‘governor’ is found, the deeds and doings of Gedaliah, however, fit the role of a governor.

<sup>15</sup> Jer. 40:14.

<sup>16</sup> J. M. Berridge, ‘Ishmael’, *ABD* 3 (1992), 512; U. Hübner, *Die Ammoniter: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte, Kultur und Religion eines transjordanischen Volkes im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (ADPV 16), Wiesbaden 1992, 203–05; G. Barkay, ‘A Bulla of Ishmael, the King’s Son’, *BASOR* 290–291 (1993), 112–13.

<sup>17</sup> E. W. Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles: A Study of the Prose Traditions in the Book of Jeremiah*, Oxford 1970, 132.

<sup>18</sup> C. R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW 176), Berlin-New York 1989, 215–21.

contrast in the final composition of 2 Kgs. 24–25 between the failure of leaders such as Gedaliah and the foretaste of hope provoked by the amnesty for Jehoiachin. On the date of the final composition of the DtrH there is a lively debate among scholars. Adherents of the Cross school reckon with a pre-exilic Dtr1 and an exilic Dtr2. Within the perimeters of this hypothesis 2 Kgs. 25:22–26 is exilic.<sup>19</sup> Adherents of the Smend school operate with a model in which an exilic history writing was edited extensively and variously even after the exile. Within this concept 2 Kgs. 25:22–30 is seen as part of DtrN, a nomistic editor writing around 560 BCE.<sup>20</sup> Würthwein, however, pleads for a post-deuteronomistic and thus post-exilic origin of 2 Kgs. 25:22–26.<sup>21</sup> Special attention should be paid to the view of Begg who argued for the possibility that DtrH ends with the rather negative note in 2 Kgs. 25:21b and that 2 Kgs. 25:22–30, labelled by him as the ‘Babylonian apologetic’ reflects the concern of the compiler of the Enneateuch (Genesis–Kings).<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately Begg does not date this final compiler but it stands for reason that the compilation took place after the final redaction of the DtrH and might be a post-exilic addition.

The Book of Jeremiah too cannot be seen as a primary historical source. The abundance of details in Jer. 40:7–41:15 makes the impression of an eyewitness report. This observation functions as the corner-stone in the more traditional biographic interpretation of the narration under consideration and of the whole of Jer. 37–44. Holladay has summarized and defended this position. Although he adjusts that Jer. 37–44 forms a composed biography, the alleged eyewitness-character of the narratives convinces him of the authorship of Baruch.<sup>23</sup> Scholars such as Pohlmann,<sup>24</sup> Thiel<sup>25</sup> and

<sup>19</sup> See e.g. R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981, 86–89; S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 136–137. Note that O. Lipschits, *The Fall and Rise of Jerusalem: Judah under Babylonian Rule*, Winona Lake 2005, 295–99, although operating with the Cross model, construes 2 Kgs. 25:22–26 as a later, albeit exilic edition.

<sup>20</sup> E.g. W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972, 140–43; later Dietrich seems to have abandoned this view: W. Dietrich, ‘Niedergang und Neuanfang: Die Haltung der Schlussredaktion des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes zu den wichtigsten Fragen ihrer Zeit’, in: B. Becking, M. C. A. Korpel (eds.), *The Crisis of the Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Traditions in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OTS 42), Leiden 1999, 45–70, esp. 46–47.

<sup>21</sup> E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 17 – 2 Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 479–80.

<sup>22</sup> C. T. Begg, ‘The Interpretation of the Gedaliah Episode (2 Kgs 25,22–26) in Context’, *Antonianum* 62 (1987), 3–11.

<sup>23</sup> W. L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26–52* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 1989, esp. 286–87; see also P. van der Veen, ‘Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis für das biblische Israel? Gedaliah und seine Mörder *par exemple* (Eine Antwort an Bob Becking)’, in: F. Ninow (ed.), *Wort und Stein: Studien zur Theologie und Archäologie* (FS U. Worschech), Frankfurt a.M. 2003, 238–59; J. R.

Seitz<sup>26</sup>, though operating with different models for reading texts, agree on the insight that in the *Scribal Chronicle* in Jer. 37–44 material from the tradition and elements of the redaction are conflated. It should be remarked, however, that the Book of Jeremiah was not composed to relate history but to proclaim a certain belief system. Its aim is to convince the post-exilic community in Jehud of the conviction that the exile has to be seen as divine punishment for a disobedient people. The post-exilic date of the final redaction of Jeremiah – and of most of the tradition in Jeremiah – has been made probable by the redaction-historical investigations.<sup>27</sup>

The relation between the two textual units has been interpreted differently. According to Gray<sup>28</sup> and many other scholars<sup>29</sup> the account of the deuteronomistic redactor is quite obviously a summary since Jer. is much better informed. M. A. O'Brien<sup>30</sup> extends this line of thought by stating that 2 Kgs. 25:22–26 was added to 2 Kgs. 25:1–21 on the basis of the Jeremiah account. Theoretically, the opposite position is also a possibility. To my knowledge the thesis that Jer. 40:7–41:15 is a redactional elaboration of 2 Kgs. 25:22–26 has not been defended.<sup>31</sup> A common source behind the two texts has been supposed by Mowinckel.<sup>32</sup> This view did not meet many

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Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21C), New York 2004, 122–25; D. J. Reimer, 'Jeremiah Before the Exile?', in: J. Day (ed.), *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (JSOT Sup 204), London-New York 2004, 207–24; Lipschits, *Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 304–47. For an analysis of Jer. 32–45 that takes account of its literary and artistic features see now E. di Pede, *Au-delà du refus: l'espoir: recherches sur la cohérence narrative de Jr 32–45 (TM)* (BZAW 357), Berlin-New York 2005.

<sup>24</sup> K.-F. Pohlmann, *Studien zum Jeremiabuch: Ein Beitrag zur Frage nach der Entstehung des Jeremiabuches* (FRLANT 118), Göttingen 1978, 108–22; K.-F. Pohlmann, 'Erwägungen zum Schlusskapitel des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk', in: *Textgemäss* (FS E. Würthwein), Göttingen 1979, 94–109.

<sup>25</sup> W. Thiel, *Die deuteronomistische Redaktion von Jeremia 26–45* (WMANT, 52), Neukirchen Vluyn 1981, 52–61.

<sup>26</sup> Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 273–79.

<sup>27</sup> See in general R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1986.

<sup>28</sup> J. Gray, *I & II Kings: A Commentary* (OTL), London<sup>3</sup> 1977, 770.

<sup>29</sup> E.g. Dietrich, *Prophetie*, 140 with n. 12; Pohlmann, *Studien*, 110–11; Pohlmann, 'Erwägungen zum Schlusskapitel', 94–109; Thiel, *Jeremia 26–45*, 54–55 n. 12; Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 86; Würthwein, *Könige*, 479; Begg, 'Interpretation of the Gedalajah Episode', 4–5; Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 215–21. This is only a small selection from the abundant literature.

<sup>30</sup> M. A. O'Brien, *The Deuteronomistic History Hypothesis: A Reassessment* (OBO 92), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1989, 271; Th. C. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*, London-New York 2005, 162–63.

<sup>31</sup> Begg, 'Interpretation of the Gedalajah Episode', 5, only toys with the idea.

<sup>32</sup> S. Mowinckel, *Zur Komposition des Buches Jeremia*, Kristiana 1914, 29–30.

adherents.<sup>33</sup> In case the majority view is correct, an exilic date for 2 Kgs. 25:22-26 is hardly defensible since the unit must be post-Jeremiac. Moreover, it is hard to understand how a 'historian' living in the Babylonian exile had access to a story on a prophet who at time was living in Egypt.

This analysis, superficial as it may be, makes clear that a gap in time of at least half a century exists between the alleged moment of the assassination of Gedaliah and the first writing down of the texts concerned. This implies that the information in the Jeremian narrative as well as in the report in the Book of Kings is based on memory. Memory is an important source for the historian. Many details on World War II are only known through oral history.<sup>34</sup> Memories include recollections of the past that would have been overlooked in an approach that accounts only for official documents. Memory, however, is limited and – what is more important – recollections do not have the character of copies of reality. They are products of the mind. Memory is steered by the active involvement of the person who recollects its observations, with the events this person was involved in.<sup>35</sup> This statement can easily be proved:

1. By referring to the often biased descriptions in the oral history on World War II and
2. by an experiment. You can ask a group of Old Testament scholars for their recollections of the day president Kennedy was assassinated. It might be interesting to compare and contrast these pieces of memory with each other and with other pieces of evidence on the event. The information on the assassination of Gedaliah is based on the memory of persons who were one way or another involved in the incident. Besides, the interim period between event and description has been a turbulent time for those responsible for this tradition.

For the modern historian these observations have two implications:

1. The historicity of the assassination and its details have to be confirmed by other sources.
2. In the post-exilic period it has been part of the religious tradition of Jerusalemite Jahwism to believe that after the sack of Jerusalem a non-Davidide ruler did not succeed in governing the area for a longer period while at the same time there is a thread of hope provoked by the amnesty

<sup>33</sup> G. Wanke, *Untersuchungen zur sogenannten Baruchschrift* (BZAW 122), Berlin-New York 1971, 115-16; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), Garden City 1988, 326; Lipschits, *Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 339-44.

<sup>34</sup> On 'oral history', see E. P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, Oxford 1988.

<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., E. F. Loftus, K. Ketcham, *The Myth of Repressed Memory*, New York 1994; G. Jonker, *The Topography of Remembrance: The Dead, Tradition and Collective Memory in Mesopotamia* (SHR 68), Leiden 1995.

for the Davidide Jehoiachin.<sup>36</sup> This tradition thus was one of the ways in which the post-exilic community accounted for its past.

This does not imply that I would deny beforehand the possibility of the historicity of the Gedaliah event.<sup>37</sup>

#### 4. Inscribed seals as 'objective' historical features

A multitude of seals has been uncovered in Israel/Palestine through archaeological excavations. A great number of seals showed up at the antiquities market, likewise. Their provenance is very uncertain. It is not clear how many of these seals are forgeries. Most of these seals bear an inscription. Generally the inscription gives the name of the owner with the name of his/her father. A second important group gives the name of the owner with his/her public office, e.g. לשמע עבד ירבעם, 'belonging to Shema the servant Jeroboam'.<sup>38</sup> The vast majority of the seals bear an iconic representation. These seals are of interest for the historian for three reasons:

1. Sociologically: they are to be seen as evidence for the growing complexity of the society in Israel/Palestine during Iron Age IIB and C. To a certain degree they are symbols of power for the ruling class.<sup>39</sup>
2. The iconic representations give an insight in the symbolic system that was in use in the area under consideration. Shifts in the repertoire might indicate changes in the belief system as has, for instance, been argued by Keel and Uehlinger as for a process of astralisation during the final part of the Iron Age.<sup>40</sup>
3. The inscriptions on the seals have provided us with a great number of names, many of whom are known from the Old Testament. Two warnings are necessary here. First, the overwhelming overrepresentation of

<sup>36</sup> See K. Baltzer, 'Das Ende des Staates Juda und die Messias-Frage', in R. Rendtorff, K. Koch (eds.), *Studien zur Theologie der alttestamentlichen Überlieferungen*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 1961, 33-43; Nicholson, *Preaching to the Exiles*, 132; Begg, 'Interpretation of the Gedaliah Episode', 3-11; Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 215-21.

<sup>37</sup> Pace Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 238-39.

<sup>38</sup> Inscribed seal from Megiddo, first half of the eighth century BCE; E. Kautzsch, 'Ein alt-hebräisches Siegel vom Tell el-Mutesellim', *MNDPV* 10 (1904), 1-14; G.I. Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions: Corpus and Concordance*, Cambridge 1991, no. 100.068.

<sup>39</sup> See e.g. N. Avigad, 'The Contribution of Hebrew Seals to an Understanding of Israelite Religion and Society', in: P. D. Miller, P. D. Hanson, S. D. McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion* (FS F. M. Cross; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 195-208; H. Weipert, *Palästina in vorhellenistischer Zeit* (HdA II.1), München 1988, 674-78; and the conclusions in D.W. Jamieson-Drake, *Scribes and Schools in Monarchic Judah: A Socio-Archaeological Approach* (JSOT Sup 109; SWBAS 9), Sheffield 1991, 136-59.

<sup>40</sup> O. Keel, C. Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole: Neue Erkenntnisse zur Religionsgeschichte Kanaans und Israels aufgrund bislang unerschlossener ikonographischer Quellen* (QD 134), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1992, 322-429.

אל and יהו/יהו as theophoric elements in these names lead Tigay<sup>41</sup> and de Moor<sup>42</sup> to the conviction that these inscribed seals plead for an early shift to Monotheism (probably already before the Iron Age). This view should be doubted since it is based on the disputable assumption that every יהו(ה) and אל in the onomasticon would refer to the same deity which was the only deity to be revered. Second, any premature identification of an individual name attested in a seal inscription with a person known from the biblical records should be avoided.<sup>43</sup>

#### 4.1. Gedaliah, Ishmael and Baalisha

In relation with the possible (non-)historicity of the Gedaliah incident some inscribed seals should be discussed.

##### 4.1.1. גדליהו Gedaliah

In Lachish the imprint of a seal was excavated dating from the second half of the seventh century BCE.<sup>44</sup> The date is anchored by the stratigraphy of the excavation. Paleographically, the script belongs to the Iron Age IIC/III period.<sup>45</sup> The inscription reads:

לגדליהו/אשר על הבית

Belonging to Gedalyahu, who is over the house

A majority of scholars identify גדליהו with Gedaliah, the assassinated governor.<sup>46</sup> Some have their doubts.<sup>47</sup> The stratigraphy of the find cor-

<sup>41</sup> J. H. Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods: Israelite Religion in the Light of Hebrew Inscriptions* (HSM 31), Atlanta 1986; J. H. Tigay, 'Israelite Religion: The Onomastic and Epigraphic Evidence' in: Miller, Hanson, McBride (eds.), *Ancient Israelite Religion*, 157-94; see also Avigad, 'Contribution', 195-97.

<sup>42</sup> J. C. de Moor, *The Rise of Yahwism: The Roots of Israelite Monotheism* (BETHL 91), Leuven 1990, 10-41.

<sup>43</sup> Unless the identification is based on a solid method, see L. J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (SBL Academia Biblica 12), Atlanta 2004.

<sup>44</sup> Edited by S. H. Hooke, 'A Scarab and Sealing from Tell Duweir', *PEQ* 67 (1935), 195-96. See also S. Moscati, *L'epigrafia ebraica antica: 1935-1950* (BeO 15), Roma 1951, 61-62 (no. 30); Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 139.

<sup>45</sup> L. G. Herr, *The Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals* (HSM 18), Missoula 1978, 91.

<sup>46</sup> Already by the editor, Hooke, 'Scarab and Sealing', 196-97; see also Moscati, *Epigrafia*, 61 (with lit.); Gray, *I & II Kings*, 771; B. Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', in: J. H. Hayes, J. M. Miller (eds.), *Israelite and Judaeon History*, London 1977, 276; D. J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, Oxford 1985, 38; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 325 (with some hesitation); S. C. Layton, 'The Steward in Ancient Israel: A Study of Hebrew (<sup>a</sup>šer) 'al-habbayit in its Near Eastern Setting', *JBL* 109 (1990), 637; Davies, 'Ancient Israel', 76 n. 4; R. Althann, 'Gedaliah', *ABD* 2 (1992), 923; P. J. King, *Jeremiah: An Archaeological Companion*, Louisville 1993, 98-99; G. W. Ahlström, *The History of*

roborates with an early sixth century BCE governor. The problematic issue, however, is the fact that various persons with the name Gedaliah are known from this period, some of whom are definitely not identical with the assassinated governor, but others might be. Arad Ostrakon 21.1-2 mentions a גְּדַלְיָהוּ [בן] אֱלִיעֶזֶר who is not identical with the assassinated governor.<sup>48</sup> The personal name Gedaliah is also known from two other inscriptions from Arad<sup>49</sup> and from an inscribed potsherd excavated at the Ophel in Jerusalem dating from the final years of the seventh century BCE.<sup>50</sup> A bulla of unknown provenance from the early sixth century BCE reads לְחַנְנִיָּהוּ בֶן גְּדַלְיָהוּ.<sup>51</sup> Another bulla of unknown provenance reads לְגְדַלְיָהוּ עֶדְבַּר הַמֶּלֶךְ.<sup>52</sup> This Gedaliah probably is the same person as the Gedaliah mentioned on a bulla from the Tell Beit Mirsim<sup>53</sup> area and stemming from the late seventh, early sixth century BCE that has the inscription לְגְדַלְיָהוּ עֶדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ.<sup>54</sup> From the same archive a bulla with the inscription לְגְדַלְיָהוּ הַשֵּׁנִי is known.<sup>55</sup> Finally, a seal of unknown provenance reading גְּדַלְיָהוּ בֶן שְׁבִי is known<sup>56</sup>; this seal cannot be related to the assassinated governor in view of a different name for the father. This survey makes clear that Gedaliah was a relatively popular name around 600 BCE which makes any identification problematical. In

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*Ancient Palestine from the Paleolithic Period to Alexander's Conquest* (JSOT Sup 146), Sheffield 1993, 799; E. Stern, *Archaeology and the Land of the Bible. Vol. II: The Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian Periods*, New York 2001, 180; E. Yamauchi, 'The Eastern Jewish Diaspora under the Babylonians', in: M. W. Chavalas, K. L. Younger (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, Grand Rapids 2002, 364; Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 239-50; J.R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21A), New York 1999, 877; A. Lemaire, 'Hebrew and West Semitic Inscriptions and Pre-Exilic Israel', in: J. Day (ed.), *In Search of Pre-Exilic Israel* (JSOT Sup 204), London-New York 2004, 376; Lipschits, *Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 84-88.

<sup>47</sup> E.g., N. Avigad, 'Baruch the Scribe and Jerahmeel the King's Son', *IEJ* 28 (1978), 52 n. 1; Reimer, 'Jeremiah Before the Exile?', 213; L. L. Grabbe, '"The Lying Pen of the Scribes"? Jeremiah and History', in: Y. Amit et al. (eds.), *Essays on Ancient Israel in its Near Eastern Context: A Tribute to Nadav Na'aman*, Winona Lake 2006, 190.

<sup>48</sup> Arad(6):2:1-2; Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1981, 42-43; Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 2.021; J. Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften. Teil 1: Text und Kommentar* (HAE II/1), Darmstadt 1995, 386-87.

<sup>49</sup> Arad(8):71:3; Arad(6):110:2.

<sup>50</sup> Jer(7):20.

<sup>51</sup> N. Avigad, 'The Seal of Jezebel', *IEJ* 14 (1964), 193-94, B, Pl 44:C; Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, no. 100.218.

<sup>52</sup> R. Deutsch, *Messages from the Past: Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Isaiah through the Destruction of the First Temple*, Tel Aviv 1999, 72-73 no. 8.

<sup>53</sup> Deutsch, *Messages from the Past*, 72; Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 239-50, argues for the identification of this גְּדַלְיָהוּ עֶדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ with גְּדַלְיָהוּ אֶלְיָהוּ [ה'].

<sup>54</sup> N. Avigad, *Hebrew Bullae from the Time of Jeremiah: Remnants of a Burnt Archive*, Jerusalem 1986, 24 no. 5; Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, no. 100.505.

<sup>55</sup> Avigad, *Burnt Archive*, 48, no. 41; Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, no. 100.541.

<sup>56</sup> N. Avigad, 'Another Group of West-Semitic Seals from the Hecht Collection', *Michmanim* 4 (July 1989), 9; Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, no. 100.874.



case the identification of the biblical Gedaliah with [גדליהו] / [גדליהו] is correct, a remark should be made on the office held by him. He has been in the position of ‘majordomo’, a ‘steward’ or a ‘perfect of the palace’. This office is mentioned several times in the Old Testament and is known from epigraphic evidence. The function can be interpreted as that of a senior officer in the palace.<sup>57</sup> If that is correct, one wonders why the Babylonian king would have appointed a former high officer in such a delicate position as the governor of a conquered area.<sup>58</sup>

In the Old Testament five different persons go by the name of Gedaliah. Next to the assassinated governor are known:

1. The son of Amariah and grandfather of Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1);
2. A descendant of Jeshua who divorced from his foreign wife in relation with the measures alleged to be taken by Ezra (Ezra 10:18);
3. A levitical singer from the Jeduthun family living after the exile (1 Chron. 25:3.9) and
4. Gedaliah, the son of Pashur, who is presented as a senior officer in the reign of Zedekiah and was, with three other officers of high rank, responsible for the incarceration of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 38:1-6).

It is astonishing that an identification of this fourth Gedaliah with [גדליהו] / [גדליהו] has not been proposed until now. In my view he is a better candidate for identification than the assassinated governor. The data in the Book of Jeremiah tally with what is known about the function of a ‘steward’.<sup>59</sup> By way of a side-step, I would like to make a comment on a remark by Davies, who connects the Yaazanyahu mentioned in 2 Kgs. 25:23 and Jer. 40:8 with a seal inscription reading *לִיאֲזַנְיָהוּ עֶבֶד הַמֶּלֶךְ*, ‘belonging to Yaazanyahu, the servant of the king’.<sup>60</sup> This seal was excavated at Mizpah and can be dated to the first half of the sixth century BCE. Although the identification proposed is not without its problems – there are other Yaazanyahu’s known from inscriptional evidence – Davies infers from the indicator ‘servant of the king’ that Yaazanyahu was serving Gedaliah as a king. He then concludes that Gedaliah might have been installed by the Babylonians as a king and not merely as governor. On this tricky basis he argues that “the biblical literature is concealing the fact, maybe because its

<sup>57</sup> See in the Hebrew Bible, e.g., Gen. 44:1; Layton, ‘Steward in Ancient Israel’, 633-49; U. Rütterswörden, *Die Beamten der israelitischen Königszeit. Eine Studie zu sr und vergleichbaren Begriffen* (BWANT 117), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1985, 77-85; Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften* 1, 264; Deutsch, *Messages from the Past*, 69.

<sup>58</sup> See, however, Van der Veen, ‘Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis’, 244-46, who argues that Gedaliah was a member of a pro-Babylonian family.

<sup>59</sup> See also the remarks by Van der Veen, ‘Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis’, 250.

<sup>60</sup> R. Hestrin, M. Dayagi-Mendels, *Seals from the First Temple Period*, Jerusalem 1978, no. 5; Davies, ‘Ancient Israel’, 76 n. 4, incorrectly renders the name as *יאֲזַנְיָהוּ*.

authors did not regard him as Davidic?”<sup>61</sup> This is, I think, making clear that ‘historical Israel’ is not unlike ‘ancient Israel’ a product of the mind. Moreover, Davies overlooks the possibility that the seal might be slightly older than the destruction of Jerusalem and that its owner kept it for a memory in better times.

Therefore, on a scale from 1-10 the probability of the identification of [ת]שר על הבית / גרליהו with the assassinated governor is in my view 2.<sup>62</sup>

#### 4.1.2. ישמעאל Ishmael

Ishmael, the son of Nethanyahu, the son of Elishama, one of the royal line, is presented as the person who killed Gedaliah. In 2 Kgs. 25:25 the genealogy is much longer than in Jer. 40:14 where the MT reads ‘Ishmael, the son of Nethanyahu’. The Old Greek version did not render the words the ‘son of Nethanyahu’. I will not discuss here the complex text-critical issues related to the Book of Jeremiah<sup>63</sup> but only refer to the possibility that in some Jeremaic tradition the identity of Gedaliah’s killer might have been ‘Ishmael’, which as such make an identification with an individual known from extra-biblical material more difficult.

The name Ishmael occurs frequently both in the Old Testament and in inscriptions from the Iron Age II-III. In the Old Testament six individuals go by the name Ishmael:

1. the son of Hagar and Abraham;
2. the murderer of Gedaliah;
3. a Benjaminite from the family of Saul, but ten generations later (1 Chron. 8:38; 9:44);
4. the father of Zebadiah, a senior officer under Jehoshaphat in Judah (2 Chron. 19:11);
5. one of the ‘officers over hundred’ operative in the revolt against Athaliah receives in the Book of Chronicles the name Ishmael (2 Chron. 23:1);
6. Ezra 10:22 mentions a priest Ishmael who was found guilty of marrying a foreign woman.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Davies, ‘*Ancient Israel*’, 76 n. 4; see also the critical remarks by Grabbe, ‘Lying Pen of the Scribes’, 191.

<sup>62</sup> See also Grabbe, ‘Lying Pen of the Scribes’, 190.

<sup>63</sup> On them, see most recently: A. Schenker, ‘Der nie aufgehobene Bund: Exegetische Beobachtungen zu Jer 31,31-34’, in: E. Zenger (ed.), *Der Neue Bund im Alten* (QD, 146), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1993, 85-112; B. Becking, ‘Jeremiah’s Book of Consolation: A textual comparison: Notes on the Masoretic text and the Old Greek version of Jeremiah xxx-xxxi’, *VT* 44 (1994), 145-69; H.-J. Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiabuches* (OBO 136), Freiburg Schweiz, Göttingen 1994.

<sup>64</sup> See Berridge, ‘Ishmael’, 512; E. A. Knauf, ‘Ishmael’, *ABD* 3 (1992), 512-13.

Several Ishmaels are known from Hebrew inscriptions.<sup>65</sup> Some of them are attested in the period surrounding the fall of Jerusalem.<sup>66</sup> None of them is explicitly stated to be the son of Nethanyahu. Besides, the name Ishmael is attested throughout the West Semitic languages from Amorite to Safaitic.<sup>67</sup>

A few years ago a bulla with an inscription was purchased in Jerusalem. The inscription has been edited by Barkay<sup>68</sup> and reads as follows:

לִישְׁמַעֵאל בֶּן הַמֶּלֶךְ

Belonging to Ishmael, the king's son.

Since the bulla has been purchased, nothing is known about the circumstances in which it was found. This implies that a relation with the stratigraphy of a certain Tell and thus the allotment to an archaeological period is impossible. Barkay offers a superficial paleographic analysis on the basis of which he considers the script to be typical of seals from the late Judaeon Monarchy. He therefore dates the bulla to the end of the seventh or the early sixth century BCE. A survey of the characters in the inscription gave me no reason to doubt this observation. The indicator 'the king's son' is known from the Old Testament<sup>69</sup> as well as from 18 seals and bullae.<sup>70</sup> The interpretation of the indicator is not clear. The interpretation rests on the question whether the word בֶּן, 'son', should be taken literally or metaphorically. Two claims are made:<sup>71</sup>

1. The term refers to members of the royal family who fulfilled certain duties at the court.<sup>72</sup>
2. The term does not as such refer to a member of the royal family. It denotes a ceremonial function probably in relation with the security of the court.

<sup>65</sup> See Davies, *Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions*, 380; Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 109; Renz, *Die althebräischen Inschriften* 1, 194 (Jer[8]:8:1); R. Deutsch, M. Heltzer, *New Epigraphic Evidence from the Biblical Period*, Tel Aviv 1995, 77:2; Deutsch, *Messages from the Past*, 124-25, 151-52, 171-72.

<sup>66</sup> For instance the ten different Ishmaels known from the archive edited by Avigad, *Burnt Archive*, nos. 78-82, 89, 101-102, 162, 173.

<sup>67</sup> See E. A. Knauf, *Ismael: Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Palästinas und Nordarabiens im 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.* (ADPV), Wiesbaden 1989, 38 n. 170; M. Dijkstra, 'Ishmael', *DDD*<sup>2</sup> 844-45.

<sup>68</sup> Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 109-14.

<sup>69</sup> Five individuals are known as a 'king's son': Jotham (2 Kgs. 15:5; 2 Chron. 26:21); Joash (2 Kgs. 22:26; 2 Chron. 18:25); Jerahmiel (Jer. 36:26; see also Avigad, 'Baruch the Scribe', 54-56; Avigad, *Burnt Archive*, 27-28); Malchiah (Jer. 38:6; see also the same person and title on a seal known from a sale catalogue referred to by Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 111) and Maaseiah (2 Chron. 28:7).

<sup>70</sup> See the outline in Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 111.

<sup>71</sup> See A. Lemaire, 'Note sur le titre BN HMLK dans l'ancien Israël', *Semitica* 29 (1979), 197-99; Avigad, *Burnt Archive*, 27-28.

<sup>72</sup> Thus: Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 254.

Two features plead for the second interpretation, though not decisively. In view of the formal structure of the seals and bullae under consideration the term *בן המלך* most likely refers to an office and not to relationships with the royal family. Not all the names known from the inscriptions and from the Old Testament are known as the name of a member of the royal family. This is, however, due to the fact that we do not possess a full heritage chart of the Judahite royal family.

Barkay suggested to identify *ישמעאל בן המלך* with Ishmael the son of Nethanyahu.<sup>73</sup> This identification is possible. Is it probable, however? Against the identification one may list the following:

1. The provenance of the bulla is uncertain with the related possibility of a forgery.
2. The name Ishmael was probably even more popular than the name Gedaliah. From that point of view the difference in the indicator, *בן המלך* versus 'son of Nethanyahu', is difficult to explain.

Therefore, on a scale from 1-10 the probability of the identification is in my view 5.<sup>74</sup>

#### 4.1.3. בעלישע Baalis

As noted above, Jer. 40:14 remarks:

Do you know, that Baalis, the king of the Ammonites, has sent Ishmael, the son of Nethanjah, in order to make an end to your life?

This note suggests that the royal party in Ammon cooperated with the anti-Babylonian party in Judah. This anti-Babylonian party in Judah might have had links with the former royal family. It might be that they were trying to bring the Davidic dynasty back to the throne in Jerusalem. This surmise cannot be tested in view of the lack of evidence.

The *versiones antiquae* give no information on the identity of Baalis, the king of the Ammonites. Most versions have rendered his name correctly.<sup>75</sup> Some late minuscule manuscripts of the LXX, the Old Greek textgroup A and the Arabic translation have transmitted a form of the name ending in /a/: i.a. *βελισσα* (538); *βελισαν* (26) viz. *βελισα* (LXX<sup>A</sup>).<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 109-14; supported by King, *Jeremiah*, 98-99; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 1-20*, 888; Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 253-55; Lemaire, 'Hebrew and West Semitic Inscriptions', 376.

<sup>74</sup> See also Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 205; Grabbe, 'Lying Pen of the Scribes', 192-93, even thinks of a lesser probability.

<sup>75</sup> Such as LXX, Vulg, Targum Jonathan, Pešitta.

<sup>76</sup> See J. Ziegler, *Jeremias – Baruch – Threni – Epistula Jeremias* (Septuaginta auctoritate societas litterarum Gottingensis, 15), Göttingen 1957, 419.

An identification on the basis of contemporary documents has until recently been impossible. The name did not occur in the Ammonite inscriptions. Besides, the Babylonian documents of the period do not refer to an Ammonite king.

There have been some efforts to interpret the name. Cross thought that the original form of the name was *\*Ba'lay*. The *s* must have been inserted as a result of dittography with the following *mēm*. בעלִי is a Canaanite hypocoristicon.<sup>77</sup> Van Selms surmised a contraction of the name בעלִי ישע, 'Baal is liberation'.<sup>78</sup> Zayadine suggested the original name Ba'al-Isis, but gave no interpretation for this name.<sup>79</sup>

Recently, two Ammonite seals have been unearthed bearing the name of בעלִי ישע. They now will be discussed.

a) מלכמער עבד בעלִי ישע

In Tell el-'Umeiri, Transjordan, a bulla with a seal impression was excavated in 1984. The inscription reads: מלכמער עבד בעלִי ישע.<sup>80</sup> The seal and its inscription are assumed to be Ammonite.<sup>81</sup> This can be supported by the fact that Tell el-'Umeiri is part of the Ammonite areas in Transjordan.<sup>82</sup> The paleography of the inscription parallels the Ammonite script of circa 600 BCE.<sup>83</sup> Because of the theophoric element מלכמ the first name in the inscription מלכמער can be considered as Ammonite. Herr<sup>84</sup> surmised that this was the first time that the name of the Ammonite national deity Milkom appeared as theophoric element.

The name of the God *mlkm* 'Milkom', however, occurred already in earlier known Ammonite inscriptions and seals:

<sup>77</sup> F. M. Cross, 'Notes on the Ammonite Inscription from Tell Sīrān', *BASOR* 212 (1973), 15 with n. 23.

<sup>78</sup> A. van Selms, *Jeremia II* (POT), Nijkerk 1974, 229 n. 7.

<sup>79</sup> F. Zayadine, 'Die Zeit der Königreiche Edom, Moab und Ammon', in: S. Mittmann *et al.* (eds.), *Der Königsweg. 9000 Jahre Kunst und Kultur in Jordanien und Palästina*, Köln 1987, 120.

<sup>80</sup> Edited by L. G. Herr, 'The servant of Baalis', *BA* 48 (1985), 169-72; see also L. T. Geraty, 'A Preliminary Report on the First Season at Tell el-'Umeiri', *AUSS* 23 (1985), 98-100; W. E. Aufrecht, *A Corpus of Ammonite Inscriptions* (ANETS, 4), Lewiston-Queenston-Lampeter 1989, 308-09; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 86; Lipschits, *Fall and Rise of Jerusalem*, 109.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. F. Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', *Syria* 46 (1987), 144; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 114.

<sup>82</sup> See the preliminary excavation-report of Geraty, 'Preliminary Report', 85-109.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Herr, 'Servant of Baalis', 172.

<sup>84</sup> Herr, 'Servant of Baalis', 171; see also Holladay, *Jeremiah 2*, 296.

1. the seal חטם מנארת ברך מלכם<sup>85</sup>;
2. the seal חטם נארת ברך מלכם<sup>86</sup>;
3. the seal חטם נארת ברך מלכם<sup>87</sup>;
4. the seal לחמכלא עבר מלכם<sup>88</sup>;
5. Amman Citadel inscription: [למ]לכם<sup>89</sup>.

The inscription on the seal לזכא בר מלכמנ<sup>90</sup> should not, in view of the non-Ammonite word בר, “son”, and because of the Aramaic script, be considered as Ammonite, but as ‘Gileadite’, ‘Deir-‘Allitic’ or ‘Midianite’ (contra Felice Israel<sup>91</sup>, who thinks, that the seal is Ammonite). It is not impossible to assume, that מלכמנ was the name of an Ammonite who later moved to an area where בר was used in stead of בן. In the same year as Herr's publication of the Baalisha seal, a seal with the inscription למלכמנ<sup>92</sup> was published. In Tell el-Mazār a potsherd with a list of Ammonite personal names, among them מכלמיה, was unearthed.<sup>93</sup>

The second name in the seal impression under consideration bears the theophoric element Ba'al. The fact that Ba'al rarely occurs as a deity or in theophoric names in Ammonite seals and inscriptions might provoke an

<sup>85</sup> Herr, *Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals*, no. 9; P. Bordreuil, *Catalogue des sceaux ouest-sémitiques inscrits de la Bibliothèque Nationale, du Louvre et du Musée Biblique de Bible et Terre Sainte*, Paris 1986, no. 76; cf. P. Bordreuil, ‘Transjordanische Siegel mit Inschriften’, in: Mittmann *et al.* (eds.), *Der Königsweg*, 165, no. 178, and Israel, ‘Les sceaux ammonites’, 142; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 141-44; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 87-88. The owner of the seal was probably of Assyrian origin but became an adherent of the Ammonite religion.

<sup>86</sup> F. Vattioni, ‘I sigilli ebraici’, *Bibl* 50 (1969), no. 229; Israel, ‘Les sceaux ammonites’, 142; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 149-50.

<sup>87</sup> J. Naveh, H. Tadmor, ‘Some doubtful Aramaic seals’, *AION* 18 (1968), 449; cf. Israel, ‘Les sceaux ammonites’, 143; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 166-67. According to Herr, *Scripts of Ancient Northwest Semitic Seals*, 74-75, and U. Hübner, ‘Fälschungen ammonitischer Siegel’, *UF* 21 (1989), 223, the last two seals are forgeries; Israel, ‘Les sceaux ammonites’, 142, 143, considers them to be ancient seals.

<sup>88</sup> Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 3-5.

<sup>89</sup> Editio princeps S. H. Horn, ‘The Amman Citadel Inscription’, *ADAJ* 12-13 (1967-68), 81-83, and S. H. Horn, ‘The Ammān Citadel Inscription’, *BASOR* 193 (1969), 2-13; cf. K. P. Jackson, *The Ammonite Language of the Iron Age* (HSM 27), Chico 1983, 9-34; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 154-63; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 17-21.

<sup>90</sup> Bordreuil, *Catalogue*, no. 64; Bordreuil, ‘Transjordanische Siegel’, 169 no. 18; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 319-20; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 78-79.

<sup>91</sup> Israel, ‘Les sceaux ammonites’, 144.

<sup>92</sup> N. Avigad, ‘Some Decorated West-Semitic Seals’, *IEJ* 35 (1985), 4-6, no. III; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 306; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 87.

<sup>93</sup> JUM 222/79:1 edited by K. Yassine, J. Teixidor, ‘Ammonite and Aramaic Inscriptions from Tell El-Mazār’, *BASOR* 264 (1986), 48-49; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 340-42; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 33-35.

argument against the assumption of Ammonite origin of the seal under consideration, but is, in view of the other evidence, not convincing.<sup>94</sup>

Soon after the finding of the inscription, identification of בעלישע with the Baalis of Jer. 40:14 was proposed. Even during the campaign at Tell el-'Umeiri, Boling<sup>95</sup> suggested the identification to Herr, the editor of the text. The identification has generally been accepted.<sup>96</sup> I will now analyse the arguments in favour and against this identification. As far as I can see, there are three arguments against it:

1. The absence of the indication 'king' before בעלישע.
2. The orthography of the name. In Jer. 40:14 Ba'alīs is spelled with a *sāmek*, the inscription reads a *shin*.<sup>97</sup>
3. The final 'ayin disappeared in Jer. 40.

There are also three arguments in support of this identification:

1. It should be noted, that in this kind of inscriptions עבד usually means 'servant/minister of the king'.<sup>98</sup> I will give a few examples:

<sup>94</sup> The full name only occurs in the seal לבעוראל עבד הבעל (Vattioni, 'I sigilli ebraici', no. 118; cf. Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 142; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 76; this seal, however, is not incorporated in Aufrecht's collection); in the fragmentary Amman Theatre Inscription [...] בעל-אבנה, 'Baal. I shall build [...]' (Editio princeps R. W. Dajani, 'The Amman Theatre Fragment', *ADAJ* 12-13 [1967-68], 65-67; see also Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 151-53; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 21-23) and probably on a seal from Tell el-Umeiri: ... בעל יע' (L. G. Herr, 'Epigraphic Finds from Tell El-'Umeiri During the 1989 Season', *AUSS* 30 [1992], 187-200, Figs. 7-8).

<sup>95</sup> See L. G. Herr, 'Is the Spelling of "Baalis" in Jeremiah 40:14 a Mutilation?', *AUSS* 23 (1985), 187; L. G. Herr, 'The Ammonites in the Late Iron Age and Persian Periods', in: B. McDonald, R. W. Younker (eds.), *Ancient Ammon* (SHCANE 17), Leiden 1999, 230.

<sup>96</sup> Amongst others by Geraty, 'Preliminary Report', 98; W. H. Shea, 'Mutilation of Foreign Names by Bible Writers: A Possible Example from Tell el-'Umeiri', *AUSS* 23 (1985), 111-15; Herr, 'Spelling of "Baalis"', 187-91; A. Lemaire, 'Recherches actuelles sur les sceaux nord-ouest sémitiques', *VT* 38 (1988), 221; G. A. Rendsburg, 'More on Hebrew *šibbolei*', *JSS* 33 (1987), 255-58; G. A. Rendsburg, 'The Ammonite phoneme /*ʔ*/', *BASOR* 269 (1988), 73-79; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 296. The identification was questioned by M. Weippert, 'The Relations of the States East of the Jordan with the Mesopotamian Power during the First Millennium BC', in: A. Hadidi (ed.), *Studies in the History and the Archaeology of Jordan III*, London-New York 1987, 101 n. 51; Stern, *Archaeology and the Land of the Bible*, 240-243, 329; Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 256.

<sup>97</sup> See Weippert, 'Relations of the States', 101 n. 51. He compares Ba'alīs with the Ugaritic personal name *b'ls*.

<sup>98</sup> Herr, 'Servant of Baalis', 171: 'a very prominent government official', Geraty, 'Preliminary Report', 98. See also *HALAT*, 732 s.v. 'ebed I, 3; and N. Avigad, 'Titles and Symbols on Hebrew Seals', *EI* 15 (1981), 303-05; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 32; Herr, 'Ammonites', 230.

Hebr.	Uzziah	= לשבניו שבניו עבד עזי <sup>99</sup>
	Jorobeam	= לשמע עבד ירבעם <sup>100</sup>
	Ahaz	= לאשנא עבד אחז <sup>101</sup>
	Hezekiah	= ליהזרה בן חלקיהו עבד חזקיהו <sup>102</sup>
Ammon.	Amminadab	= לאדנר עבד עמנרב <sup>103</sup>
	Amminadab	= לעדנפלט עבד עמנרב <sup>104</sup>
	Pa/uduilu	= לבידאל עבד פדאל <sup>105</sup>

In some Aramaic seals it is difficult to decide whether עבד means 'servant/minister of the king' because of the fact that the names following עבד cannot yet be equated with known Aramaic kings.<sup>106</sup> Besides עבד occurs meaning 'servant of a deity': Ammon: לבאורלא עבד הבעל<sup>107</sup> and Hebr. למקניו עבד יהוה.<sup>108</sup>

2. In an analysis of the depictions on the seal Younker showed that 'It is likely, that the seal motifs represent the royal insignia of the kingdom of Ammon.'<sup>109</sup>
3. The script of the inscription corresponds with the Ammonite script of circa 600 BCE, which suits the period.<sup>110</sup>
4. The archaeological context of the find suggests that the seal was found in an administrative building et Tell el-'Umeiri vital for the wine production on behalve of the Ammonite royal house.<sup>111</sup>

The arguments in support of the identification seem to be more convincing, than the arguments against it. The orthographic problem will be discussed below.

<sup>99</sup> L. Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres cachets et pierres gravées du style oriental*, Paris 1923, no. A 1147.

<sup>100</sup> D. Diringer, *Le iscrizione antico-ebraiche palestinesi*, Florence 1934, Pl. XXI, 5.

<sup>101</sup> S. Moscati, *L'epigrafia ebraica antica: 1935-1950* (BeO, 15), Roma 1951, Pl. XII, 9.

<sup>102</sup> R. Hestrin, M. Dayagi, 'A Seal Impression of a Servant of King Hezekiah', *IEJ* 24 (1974), Pl. 2.

<sup>103</sup> G. L. Harding, 'Four Tomb Groups from Jordan', *APEF* 6 (1953), 1-70; Pl. VI; cf. Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 142; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 96-99; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 53.

<sup>104</sup> C. C. Torrey, 'A Few Ancient Seals', *AASOR* 3 (1923), 104; cf. Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 142; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 40-43; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 53-54.

<sup>105</sup> *CIS* I, 76; cf. F.M. Cross, 'Leaves from an Epigraphist's Notebook', *CBQ* 36 (1974), 493-94; Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 143; Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 30-33; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 75-76.

<sup>106</sup> It concerns the personal names הרבעד (*CIS* II, 74), עזרשמן (H. Seyrig, 'Antiquités syriennes', *Syria* 32 [1955], 32) and אברם (A. de Ridder, *Les bijoux et les pierres gravées* [Collection de Clerq VI/2], Paris 1911, no. 2519).

<sup>107</sup> Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', no. 118; Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 142.

<sup>108</sup> F. M. Cross, 'The Seal of Miqnêyaw, Servant of Yahweh', in: L. Gorelick, E. Williams-Forte (eds.), *Ancient Seals and the Bible*, Malibu 1983, 55-63.

<sup>109</sup> R. W. Younker, 'Israel, Judah and Ammon and the Motifs on the Baalis seal from Tell el-'Umeiri', *BA* 48 (1985), 173-80.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Herr, 'Servant of Baalis', 172.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Herr, 'Ammonites', 228-32.



If the identification is correct, then one question is raised. Why did Jeremiah, or the author of the Book of Jeremiah, change the name of the Ammonite king? Geraty proposed three possibilities:

1. "It may represent an intentional pious change in the Bible to avoid heathen theology";
2. Ba'alīs might be a correct rendering of the way the Judaeans interpreted the pronunciation of the Ammonite name.
3. Ba'alīs is a hypocoristicon.<sup>112</sup>

The surmise of a conscious change on pious grounds is defended by Shea.<sup>113</sup> Herr<sup>114</sup>, however, rejected it on the basis of solid argumentation. The Book of Jeremiah contains several personal names with "other" deities as theophoric elements, which have not been mutilated: Benhadad; Evil-merodak; Nabushasban; Nebuzaradan; Nergalsharezer and Nebuchadnezzar. Besides, the example given by Shea is not convincing. In the name Abed-Nego (Dan. 1:7ff) probably the theophoric element is mutilated, when it can be assumed that Nabu was changed to Nego. In Ba'alīs the name of Ba'al remains recognizable. That means that if the name is a mutilation on pious grounds, this mutilation is not very successful.

I will add one argument to Herr's rejection of the hypothesis of a pious change. This argument is likewise an answer to the second point noted above against the identification of בעלישע with Ba'alīs. The name בעלישע has generally been vocalized as *\*Ba'alyiša'* or *\*Ba'alyāša'*.<sup>115</sup> This vocalization is not explained. It presupposes an interpretation of the *y* as a consonant. The parallelism with the personal name Elisha, however, shows that this is not self-evident. The name Elisha is known from the Old Testament (1 Kgs. 19; 2 Kgs. 2–9; 13) and occurs as אֵלִישָׁע<sup>116</sup> and, without a

<sup>112</sup> Geraty, 'Preliminary Report', 100.

<sup>113</sup> Shea, 'Mutilation of Foreign Names', 111–15.

<sup>114</sup> Herr, 'Spelling of "Baalīs"', 187–91.

<sup>115</sup> E.g., by Herr, 'Servant of Baalīs', 169–72; Geraty, 'Preliminary Report', 98; Herr, 'Spelling of "Baalīs"', 187; Weippert, 'Relations of the States', 101 n. 51; Holladay, *Jeremiah* 2, 296; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37–52, 114.

<sup>116</sup> Ammonite: Seal K. Galling, 'Ein hebräisches Siegel aus der babylonischen Diaspora', *ZDPV* 51 (1928), 234–36; Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', 41; Herr, *Scripts*, 64, no. 15; Hestrin, Dayagi, 'Seal Impression of a Servant', 108; seal Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', 117; seal Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', 317; cf. Bordreuil, *Catalogue*, no. 81; Bordreuil, 'Trans-jordanische Siegel', 168, no. 184; seal A. Lemaire, 'Nouveaux sceaux nord-ouest sémitiques', *Semitica* 33 (1983), 20–21, no. 6.

Phoenician: seal F. Vattioni, 'I sigilli fenici', *AION* 31 (1981), no. 71. According to A. Lemaire, 'Notes d'épigraphie nord-ouest sémitique', *Syria* 61 (1985), 44, the seal is Ammonite, but see Israel, 'Les sceaux ammonites', 145.

Hebrew: Siloam inscription (KAI 189; Jer[8]:3):4.7; Ostraca from Samaria 1 (KAI 183; Sam[8]:1):4.7 and 41:1; Ostracon from Arad (Y. Aharoni, *Arad Inscriptions*, Jerusalem 1981; Arad[6]:24):15; Arad(6):24:19–20 and an inscription in Old Hebrew script on an

*mater lectionis*, as אֶלֶשׁ<sup>117</sup> on West Semitic seals and inscriptions. There exists some Ammonite names with the *yod* as an internal *mater lectionis*: אֶלֶיִם<sup>118</sup>, cf. <sup>א</sup>לִי'ām (2 Sam. 11:3; 23:34) and אֶבִיחַי<sup>119</sup> to be vocalized \*'abîhay.

The name of Elisha is vocalised in Hebrew as <sup>א</sup>לִישָׁא. By analogy בעֲלִישָׁא could be read as \*ba<sup>a</sup>lîšā'. Departing from this assumed vocalization, Hebrew Ba'alîs can be understood as a change in two phases. In the first phase the Ammonite /š/ was rendered as a Hebrew /s/. Next, the final 'ayin decayed. This possibility has already been suggested by Puech be it interrogatively.<sup>120</sup> It supposes an hypothesis on the pronunciation of the Ammonite *shin* in \*ba<sup>a</sup>lîšā', i.e. that the sound could be interpreted by a Judaeans of the sixth century BCE as a *sāmek*. Such an hypothesis could be tested if there were more names of Ammonites containing a *shin* that also occurred in the Old Testament. This is rather not the case. There are, however, two phenomena that can strengthen this phonetic hypothesis:

1. The /š/ in \*ba<sup>a</sup>lîšā' goes back to a proto-semitic unvoiced interdental /t/.<sup>121</sup> This consonant is rendered with a *t* in Ugaritic and Old South Arabic; with a *shin* in Assyrian; Old Aramaic, Hebrew and in the inscription of Balaam from Deir 'Allah; with a *taw* in the Official Aramaic of the Achaemenian period, but with a *sāmek* in the Aramaic part of the bilingual inscription from Tell Fekherye.<sup>122</sup> These differences make it possible to assume, that in Ammonite the *shin* was pronounced in such a way, that Judaeans rendered it with a *sāmek*. Maybe, the Ammonites still pronounced it as the Proto-Semitic unvoiced interdental /t/.<sup>123</sup>

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ivory theiormorphic figurine from *Nimrūd* (ed. A. R. Millard, 'Alphabetical Inscriptions on Ivories from Nimrud', *Iraq* 24 [1962], Tb 14b and p. 49; Nim[8]:2:1).

West Semitic: Ostrakon ND 6231 from *Nimrūd* (ed. J.B. Segal, 'An Aramaic ostrakon from Nimrud', *Iraq* 19 [1957], 139-45 and Pl. 14; cf. B. Becking, 'Kann das Ostrakon ND 6231 von *Nimrūd* für ammonitisch gehalten werden?', *ZDPV* 104 [1988], 59-67, and F. Israel, 'Die Sprache des Ostrakons von Nimrud', *UF* 21 [1989], 223-35).

- <sup>117</sup> Seal Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', 115. G. Dalman, 'Ein neugefundenes Jahwebild', *PJB* 2 (1906), 49-50, doubted the authenticity of the seal; according to Hübner, 'Fälschungen', only a reconsideration of the seal can decide, whether the seal is a forgery or not.

<sup>118</sup> Herr, *Scripts*, 70.

<sup>119</sup> Vattioni, 'Sigilli ebraici', no. 103.

<sup>120</sup> E. Puech, 'L'inscription de la statue d'Amman et la paléographie ammonite', *RB* 92 (1985), 10 n. 22.

<sup>121</sup> The name Elisha, for instance, is written in Lihyanite: 'lyt'.

<sup>122</sup> Editio princeps: A. Abu-Assaf, P. Bordreuil, A. R. Millard, *La statue de Tell Fekherye et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne* (ERC 7), Paris 1982; see especially the outline on 44.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Rendsburg, 'More on Hebrew *šibbole*', 255-58; Rendsburg, 'The Ammonite phoneme /t/, 73-79. But see the critical remarks of A. F. L. Beeston, '*Šibbole*; a Further Comment', *JSS* 33 (1987), 259-61.

2. The shibboleth incident in Judges 12 indicates, that there existed a diversity in pronunciation of the interdental /t/ between Ephraimites and Gileadites.

The decay of the final *‘ayin* is difficult to explain. Possibly the variant readings in the Old Greek tradition mentioned above – βελισσα; βελισαν viz. βελισα – preserved a reminiscence to the original form of the name.

Finally I will make a few remarks about the Ammonite inscription in relation to Jer. 40:14. It is plausible to identify Ba‘alisha with Ba‘alis. This identification, however, gives no argument in the literary-historical question on the priority of Jer. 40:7–41:5 above 2 Kgs. 25:22–26 or vice versa. Yet it becomes clear, that the mentioning of Ba‘alis, the king of the Ammonites as the bad genius behind the assassination of Gedaliah is more than just a literary motif in an ancient story. There is a great amount of plausibility that it refers to reality.

#### b) בעלישע בני אמן

A second seal has been published claiming that it would bear the name of Baalis, the King of the Ammonites known from Jer. 40:14 as the one who plotted the assassination of Gedaliah the governor over Judah appointed by the Babylonians after their final capture of Jerusalem.<sup>124</sup> The seal is a scarab shaped tiny piece made from brown agate. It measures 0.5 inches in diameter and is 0.2 inches thick.<sup>125</sup> On the seal are three lines of an inscription separated by double lines. Between these double lines a winged sphinx wearing an Egyptian-style apron with a tail in the shape of the character *s* is depicted.

The editor of the seal does not supply information on the provenance of the new find. He only remarks that the seal “recently ... has come to light”.<sup>126</sup> A hint at an archaeological context indicating at which excavation the seal was found is absent. The interested reader is left with the idea that the object was purchased at the antiquities market. This circumstance might cause the idea that the seal is a forgery.<sup>127</sup> As long as additional information is not supplied, a decision on this point cannot be made. For the time being I take the seal to be genuine since both paleography and iconography make an authentic impression, although I am aware of the fact that this impression might be misleading.

<sup>124</sup> R. Deutsch, ‘Seal of Ba‘alis surfaces’, *BAR* 95/2 (1999) 46–49.

<sup>125</sup> According to Deutsch, ‘Seal of Ba‘alis’, 46; note that the seal is not edited with a scale to confirm his measurement.

<sup>126</sup> Deutsch, ‘Seal of Ba‘alis’, 46.

<sup>127</sup> Hübner, ‘Fälschungen ammonitischer Siegel’, has indicated that about 25% of the Ammonite seals known so far should be considered as forgeries.

Deutsch proposes to read: ב[ן] ע[מ] // מלך // [ל] בעליש[ע], '[Belonging to] Ba'alish // King of // the B[nei Ammon]'.<sup>128</sup> This reading is plausible but should be considered cautiously. In the first line the *l*, 'Belonging to', the introduction to almost all West Semitic seal inscriptions is absent. It might have been broken or worn off. Of the royal name only the three first characters are clearly legible. The fourth sign might be the beginning of a *yod* the fifth sign most probably is the lower part of the Ammonite letter *šin*. The '*ayin*' as final character is tentative based on the orthography of the name Ba'alish known from an Ammonite bulla with a seal impression.<sup>129</sup> The word *mlk*, 'king', in the middle register is clearly legible. For the lower register Deutsch proposes to read ב[ן] ע[מ]. On the photo of the seal printed on the cover of the pertinent issue of *Biblical Archaeology Review* only a scratch that might be interpreted as the upper end of an Ammonite *nūn* is visible.<sup>130</sup> At the place where Deutsch reads the remains of a *bēt*, the surface of the seal is worn off. Although the addition of Deutsch makes sense in the context, there is no evidence for it on the artifact. In sum it would be more cautious to read [x x x] // מלך // [ל] בעליש[ע] (?), '[Belonging to] Ba'alish[a(?)] // king // [of .....]'.<sup>131</sup>

Without argument, Deutsch identifies [ל] בעליש[ע] (?), 'Ba'alish[a(?)]', from this new seal with the Ammonite king ב[ן] ע[מ], 'Ba'alish', mentioned at Jer. 40:14. Above, I have argued that the Ammonite name should be read as *\*ba<sup>a</sup>līšā*. Deutsch proposes as meaning of the name Ba'alisha 'Ba'al has saved' or 'Ba'al is salvation'.<sup>132</sup> He construes the element ב[ן] to be theophoric and the element ש[ע] either as a Qal pf 3.m.s. or as a noun comparable to Hebrew ש[ע], 'help; salvation'. Although this interpretation probably is correct, I would like to mention an alternative for it. In Biblical Hebrew a root *\*šw* exists meaning 'to be noble' that occurs in the adjective *šôwa*, 'noble'.<sup>133</sup> Tigay reckons with the possibility, that in the personal name *yhwš* 'the element *š*' means 'noble'.<sup>134</sup> In Ugaritic a noun *š*, 'hero', is attested as a title for Karitu derived from a root *\*šw*.<sup>135</sup> Hebrew *šā* would

<sup>128</sup> Deutsch, 'Seal of Ba'alish', 46; see also Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 256-58.

<sup>129</sup> Discussed above.

<sup>130</sup> As has been argued by Van der Veen, 'Beschriftete Siegel als Beweis', 256-58, on the basis of an enlarged photograph and a *Fimoabdruck* of the seal supplied to him by Robert Deutsch.

<sup>131</sup> This reading is also suggested by W. E. Aufrecht, 'Ammonite Texts and Language', in: B. McDonald, R.W. Younker (eds.), *Ancient Ammon* (SHCANE 17), Leiden 1999, 181.

<sup>132</sup> Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 309; Deutsch, 'Seal of Ba'alish', 48; Herr, 'Ammonites', 230.

<sup>133</sup> Isa. 32:5; Job 34:19.

<sup>134</sup> Tigay, *You Shall Have No Other Gods*, 81 n. 37.

<sup>135</sup> This root should not be confused with the Ugaritic verb *šy*, 'to offer'.

then be a Qal pf 3.m.s. meaning 'he is noble'.<sup>136</sup> By implication the name of the Ammonite king could mean 'My Lord is noble'.

The seal contains an interesting iconographic detail. Its middle register depicts a winged sphinx wearing an Egyptian style apron. Deutsch accepts Egyptian influence but notifies identifying characteristics particular to Ammonite culture.<sup>137</sup> He particularly refers to the tail of the sphinx in the form of the letter *s*. The same motif occurs on a seal of Pado'il, most probably the King of the Ammonites in the last years of the eighth century BCE.<sup>138</sup> Deutsch refers to the fact that the same motif occurs also on the seal of the Edomite king Qausgabri.<sup>139</sup> The *s*-shaped tail, however, cannot be taken as a characteristic for Transjordanian royal seals, since it also occurs on non-royal artefacts from Israel.<sup>140</sup>

The absence of a clear archaeological context for the second seal of Ba'alisha makes it difficult to draw historical conclusions. Since the seal cannot be dated with the help of a stratigraphy, it remains tentative to identify 'Ba'alisha the king' with 'Ba'alisha the master of Milkom'ur' and with 'Baalis mentioned in Jer. 40:14'. Our limited knowledge of the history of the Ammonites and of the development of their script should make cautious to draw extensive conclusions.

### c) Probability of identity

On a scale from 1-10 the probability of the identification of 'Ba'alisha the master of Milkom'ur' with 'Baalis mentioned in Jer. 40:14' is in my view 8.<sup>141</sup> The probability of the identification of 'Ba'alisha the king' with 'Ba'alisha the master of Milkom'ur' would on the same scale be 7 since the script in the two seals on which they are attested differs.<sup>142</sup> This means that

<sup>136</sup> Not an adjective; cf. the remarks of J. D. Fowler, *Theophoric Personal Names in Ancient Hebrew. A Comparative Study* (JSOT Sup 94), Sheffield 1988, 114.

<sup>137</sup> Deutsch, 'Seal of Ba'alish', 48.

<sup>138</sup> Editio princeps: A. Reifenberg, 'Ancient Jewish Stamps and Seals', *PEQ* 70 (1939), 196-97, no. 3; see Aufrecht, *Corpus*, 79-80; Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 106-07; N. Avigad, B. Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Seals*, Jerusalem 1997, no. 965. On the probability of the identification of this פדאל with the Ammonite king Pudu'ilu mentioned in inscriptions of Sennacherib and Esarhaddon, see Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 193-194.

<sup>139</sup> See C.-M. Bennett, 'Fouilles d'Umm el-Biara. Rapport préliminaire', *RB* 73 (1966), 372-403; J. R. Bartlett, *Edom and the Edomites* (JSOT Sup 77), Sheffield 1989, 213.

<sup>140</sup> For instance on an Iron Age IIB scaraboid from the area of Shechem; see A. Rowe, *A Catalogue of Egyptian Scarabs, Scaraboids, Seals and Amulets in the Palestine Archaeological Museum*, Cairo 1936, no. SO. 3; Keel, Uehlinger, *Göttinnen, Götter und Gottessymbole*, 292; Abb. 258c.

<sup>141</sup> This concurs with the proposal of Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 205, to consider both Ammonite seals mentioned as a Grade 2ID for Baalis; see also Reimer, 'Jeremiah Before the Exile?', 214; Grabbe, 'Lying Pen of the Scribes', 190-91.

<sup>142</sup> As can be inferred from a comparison between, e.g., the forms of the 'ayin as well as of the *lamed* in both inscriptions.

an easy identification as implied by Deutsch<sup>143</sup> should be considered with caution.

Finally, 'names' are not 'stories'. With this clause I mean that the occurrence from an archaeological excavation of a name already known from the Hebrew Bible might suggest the historicity of the character but does not imply that all elements from the Biblical story should be construed as historical. This means that even a full identification of 'Ba'alisha the king' with 'Ba'alisha the master of Milkom'ur' and with 'Baalish mentioned in Jer. 40:14' does not imply the historicity of all the elements in the Biblical report on the assassination of Gedaliah. The event is mentioned in 2 Kgs. 25:22-26 and Jer. 40:7-41:15, the latter text supplying the reader with more details on the political background of the event. Jer. 40:7-41:15, however, should be seen as a post-exilic text that might be biased by pro-Davidic and anti-Ammonite feelings. The publication of the new seal does not hint at the historicity of these details neither positive nor negative.

### 5. Confirmation of historicity?

In my view the names גְּדַלְיָהּ, יִשְׁמָאֵל and בַּעֲלִישַׁע cannot for 100% be identified with Gedaliah, Ishmael and Baalis. What implications can be drawn as to the historicity of the Gedaliah incident? Even if it could be proved that גְּדַלְיָהּ, יִשְׁמָאֵל and בַּעֲלִישַׁע are indeed identical with Gedaliah, Ishmael and Baalis, this does not prove the historicity of the Gedaliah incident.<sup>144</sup> The inscriptions can make clear that persons by these names actually lived in the period under consideration. It should be noted that the Babylonians pursued a system of local governorship in occupied territories which make the appointment of an individual like Gedaliah plausible.<sup>145</sup> That, however, does not imply that acts pursued by these individuals as reported or narrated in later narratives are thus historical.<sup>146</sup> By way of an analogy: when you read on a wall in a dead end street in Oxford the words 'Sebastian was here' written in typical twentieth century CE characters, that does not prove the historicity of the narratives in *Brideshead Revisited*,<sup>147</sup> although many scenes from that novel could eventually and possibly have happened in the first part of the century mentioned. This is, however, not a

<sup>143</sup> Deutsch, 'Seal of Ba'alish', 46-49.

<sup>144</sup> Pace Hübner, *Ammoniter*, 203-05; Barkay, 'Bulla of Ishmael', 113; King, *Jeremiah*, 98-99.

<sup>145</sup> See e.g. Oded, 'Judah and the Exile', 275; Wiseman, *Nebuchadrezzar and Babylon*, 38; pace Davies, *Ancient Israel*, 76 n. 4.

<sup>146</sup> This view has been adopted by Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons*, 202; M. E. Wills, *Joshua to Kings: History, Story, Theology*, London-New York 2006, 52-54.

<sup>147</sup> E. Waugh, *Brideshead Revisited: The Sacred and Profane Memories of Captain Charles Ryder*, London 1964.

honest analogy, since Waugh's novel is a-historical and does not claim that the characters had actually lived. The report in 2 Kgs. and the story in Jeremiah are based on historical characters and thus are limited in that sense that they had to deal with the characteristics of the individuals.

Is it still possible to write a history of Israel and how do I think the text of the Hebrew Bible can be used in such a history? After this small exercise, my answer to this question is still positive. Now I want to add that the writing of such a reconstruction of a part of the past requires a discussion on a multitude of evidence in minute detail and thus a balanced philosophy of history to supply us the rules of the game of historical reconstruction.

#### *6. The Gedaliah incident as tradition*

The report on the assassination of Gedaliah is the pre-final entry in the present composition of the Book of Kings. It is only followed by the section on the amnesty for Jehojachin to be discussed in the next chapter. The Book of Kings is – in my view – an historical narrative composed to help the Judaeans, in exile as well as in the land, to cope with the disaster of the downfall. The evaluation of the past in the Book of Kings tends to a theology of acceptance that can be summarised as follows: Despite his love for Israel, YHWH triggered by the cumulation of wrondoings of the people and their kings, had to abandon his people. The two final sections of the Book of Kings can be read with a question in mind: Is there still hope for the people of God? Is the exile to be seen as a dead end street or is the one way or another a way out of the darkness?

It is interesting to note that Ishmael the assassin is presented as of royal lineage. He was from the house of David. During the exile and afterwards, dreams on the reinstallment of the Davidic dynasty were alive among the Judaeans. Ishmael's act in 2 Kgs. 25 can be interpreted as way to reinstall the Davidic dynasty by ways of using human power. His grasping of power, however, was without effect. After killing Gedaliah no kingdom was established, but the Judaeans had to flee to Egypt in fear of the Chaldeans. This observations lead me to the following proposal regarding the literary function and theological meaning of the episode: Grasping power even by a descendant from the Davidic dynasty is not the way out of the darkness of the exile.

## Chapter X: Jehoiachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25:27-30<sup>\*</sup>

### *1. 2 Kings 25:27-30: Text and translation*

The Book of Kings, in its present form, ends with a note on the fate of Jehoiachin, the former king of Judah who is said to have been released from prison by the Babylonian king Evil-Merodach:

- 27 In the thirty seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, pardoned, in his accession year, Jehoiachin, king of Judah, from prison.
- 28 He spoke kind things to him and gave him a throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon:
- 29 'He will change his prison-clothes.  
He will eat food permanently by his favor, all the days of his life.
- 30 His allowance will be a permanent allowance  
Distributed to him on behalf of the king, all the days of his life.'

A few remarks on this translation will now be made:

- 27-30 *BHS* notes some differences with the Masoretic text of Jer. 52:31-34. They are all easily understood when assuming that the text-form in Kings is more original.
- 27 The name Evil-Merodach is the Hebrew representation of Babylonian *Amel-Marduk*, the name meaning 'man of the deity Marduk'. The Hebrew vocalization 'ēwīl mutilates the name into 'jester of Marduk'.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>\*</sup> This chapter contains a thoroughly revised version of my paper 'Jehojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Remarks on 2 Kings 25,27-30', in: C. Brekelmans, J. Lust (eds.), *Pentateuchal and Deuteronomistic Studies: Papers read at the XIIIth IOSOT Congress Leuven 1989* (BETHL 94), Leuven 1990, 283-93.

<sup>1</sup> See M. Gerhards, 'Die Begnadigung Jojachins – Überlegungen zu 2. Kön. 25,27-30 (mit einem Anhang zu den Nennungen Jojachins auf Zuteilungslisten aus Babylonien)', *BN* 94 (1998), 52; J. R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37–52: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 21C), New York 2004, 535.



- The words וַיִּזְיֵא אֹהֶי in Jer. 52:31 and in some Hebrew manuscripts of 2 Kgs. 25:27, see also LXX, Lucianic Revision and the Targum, are to be seen as an interpretive addition.<sup>2</sup>
- 29 The shift from narrative וַיִּקְטֹּל-forms in 27-28 into וַיִּקְטֹּל-forms (29-30) combined with the fact that from 29a onward Jehoiachin is the subject of the verbs, suggests that 2 Kgs. 25:29-30 are to be construed as the direct speech of the Babylonian king Evil-Merodach to Jehoiachin.<sup>3</sup> Next to that the וַיִּקְטֹּל-forms in vss. 29-30 should be construed as frequentatives indicating the ongoing character of the 'eating' etc.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Analogies

In the report some words and phrases occur that have analogies with other texts in the Hebrew Bible as well as from the Ancient Near East.

### 2.1 To lift up the head

The Hebrew phrase וַיִּשָּׂא רֹאשׁ, 'to lift up the head of ...', has a juridical background and refers to the abrogation of a once-given punishment. This becomes clear from the various instances in which the phrase is used in the Hebrew Bible<sup>5</sup> as well as from its Akkadian cognate *rēša našû*.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See K. Spronk, 'Aanhangsel of uitvloei. Over het slot van het deuteronomistisch geschiedwerk (2 Koningen 25:27-30)', *GerTT* 88 (1988), 166; *pace*, e.g., E. Würthwein, *Die Bücher der Könige: 1. Kön. 17 – 2. Kön. 25* (ATD 11,2), Göttingen 1984, 481; M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings* (AB 11), New York 1988, 328.

<sup>3</sup> This interpretation makes the view of Würthwein, *Könige*, 481, that vs. 29 were a later addition, less plausible. Besides, it underscores the tradition-critical assumption of E. Zenger, 'Die deuteronomistische Interpretation der Rehabilitierung Jojachins', *BZ* 12 (1968), 17-18, on the Mesopotamian provenance of this report.

<sup>4</sup> See D. F. Murray, 'Of All the Years the Hopes – or Fears? Jehoiachin in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30)', *JBL* 120 (2001), 251.

<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Gen. 40:13.19.20; Job 10:15; with I. L. Seeligman, 'Zur Terminologie des Gerichtsverfahren im Wortschatz des biblischen Hebräisch', in: B. Hartmann *et al.* (eds.), *Hebräische Wortforschung* (FS W. Baumgartner; VT Sup 16), Leiden 1967, 270-71; *DCH* 5, 760, 1c.(2); D. Marcus, "'Lifting up the Head": On the Trail of a Word Play in Genesis 40', *Proof* 10 (1990), 17-27; Murray, 'Jehoiachin in Babylon', 253; see also the imagery in Psalm 123; *pace* Zenger, 'Rehabilitierung', 22-23.

<sup>6</sup> See *AHW*, 762-63 s.v. G.I.3.

## 2.2. To speak good words: A pardon within the framework of a treaty?

The Hebrew phrase *דבר טוב*, 'to speak good words' has been construed as a reference to a treaty between Evil-Merodach and Jehoiachin.<sup>7</sup> It can indeed be observed that the expression functions as such in the Hebrew Bible, both in an intra-human (1 Kgs. 12:7) and in a divine-human (1 Sam. 25:30; 2 Sam. 7:8) treaty or covenant. In 2 Kgs. 25:28, *טובה*, however, is not an adjective in the singular – as in the three texts mentioned – but a substantive in the plural. The noun *טבה* here has the general meaning of 'grace; release'. The formula *דבר טובות* can be seen as a counterpart to the expression *דבר משפט* describing the judgment over Zedekiah (2 Kgs. 25:6). An understanding of this phrase as part of a treaty is not plausible since no other elements or idiom in 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 are referring to a treaty between Evil-Merodach and Jehoiachin.<sup>8</sup> Moran has argued that the Akkadian cognate *tābtu* can refer to treaty-relations.<sup>9</sup> This noun occurs several times in the Neo-Assyrian treaties and loyalty-oaths, but always in those sections that stipulate that the loyal vassal were not to speak 'things that are not good' about the Mesopotamian overlord or his offspring.<sup>10</sup> This, by implication, is a category different from the one assumed in 2 Kgs. 25:27-30.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.3. 'A throne above the throne'

Weinfeld has pointed to an interesting parallel of this phrase in the report on the campaign of the Assyrian king Sargon II against Urartu:

Before Ullusunū<sup>12</sup> I spread a heavy table and made his throne higher than that of Iranzu who begot him.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>7</sup> E.g., by Zenger, 'Rehabilitierung'; J. D. Levenson, 'The Last Four Verses in Kings', *JBL* 103 (1984), 353-61; challenged, however, by N. Na'aman, 'Royal Vassals or Governors? On the Status of Sheshbazzar and Zerubbabel in the Persian Empire', *Henoch* 22 (2000), 35-44 = N. Na'aman, *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors: Interaction and Counteraction* Collected Essays I, Winona Lake 2006, 403-14.

<sup>8</sup> See M. Weinfeld, 'The Counsel of the "Elders" to Rohoboam and its Implications', *Maarav* 3 (1982), esp. 53; C. T. Begg, 'The Significance of Jehoiachin's Release: A New Proposal', *JSOT* 36 (1986), 52-53; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 328-29; Spronk, 'Aanhangsel of uitvloeisel', 167; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37-52, 535-36.

<sup>9</sup> W. L. Moran, 'A Note on the Treaty Terminology of the Sefire Stelas', *JNES* 22 (1963), 173-76.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Esarhaddon's Succession Treaty *SAA* 3, 6:271.

<sup>11</sup> See also Gerhards, 'Begnadigung Jojachins', 53, 61; Murray, 'Jehoiachin in Babylon', 254-56.

<sup>12</sup> The Mannaeen king who expressed his submission to Sargon II.

<sup>13</sup> Sg II Letter to God after the eighth campaign: W. Mayer, *Sargons Feldzug gegen Urartu – 714 v. Chr.*, Berlin 1984, 72:62.

It must be observed that this feature is absent in other reports on the same episode.<sup>14</sup> The phrase is – as far as I can see – not attested in other Mesopotamian inscriptions. Nevertheless, the idiom suggests that a special treatment had befallen Ullusunū. This might imply that Jehoiachin too was granted a special treatment. Barstad assumes a literary motif. In his opinion 2 Kgs. 25:28 is an example of “the literary genre of special treatment of Jews (sic!) at foreign courts, and slightly reminiscent of the fates of Joseph, Daniel and Esther”.<sup>15</sup> Lundbom refers in this connection to a passage in the ‘Court of Nebuchadnezzar Document’ (*ANET*, 308) as well as to the fate of the captured Canaanite king Adonibezek in Judg. 1:7.<sup>16</sup>

#### 2.4. Jehoiachin as a substitute king?

De Liagre Böhl offered the possibility that Jehoiachin's release was part of the ritual of the substitute king (*šar puḫi*) executed to dissipate evil powers before the first *Akitu*, or spring New Year of the new Babylonian king.<sup>17</sup> Against this proposal it must be observed that the report in 2 Kgs. 25 does not state that Jehoiachin was installed as king. Besides, a ‘substitute king’ normally was in office for about 100 days, while 2 Kgs. 25 remarks as in a refrain, that Jehoiachin received this treatment ‘all the days of his life’. Therefore, it will be better to look at a suggestion of some other scholars that Jehoiachin's release was due to an act of amnesty on the occasion of the accession of Evil-Merodach to the throne.<sup>18</sup>

#### 2.5. Amnesty

The Book of Kings has transmitted a very interesting detail on the date of Jehoiachin's release: It took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month of the accession year of Evil-Merodach.<sup>19</sup> This is only a few days before the first

<sup>14</sup> Sg II Annals; Sg II Display Inscription.

<sup>15</sup> H. M. Barstad, *The Myth of the Empty Land: A Study in the History and Archaeology of Judah during the 'Exilic' Period* (Symbolae Osloenses Fasciculus Suppletorius 28), Oslo 1996, 28.

<sup>16</sup> Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37–52, 536.

<sup>17</sup> F. M. Th. de Liagre Böhl, *Opera Minora*, Groningen 1953, 63–80. On the institution and the inscriptional evidence for it see S. Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars to the Kings Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal II* (AOAT 5/2), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1983, 54–65.

<sup>18</sup> J. Steinmann, *Le livre de la consolation d'Israël* (LD 28), Paris 1960, 25; Zenger, ‘Rehabilitierung’; J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London <sup>3</sup>1977, 733; Würthwein, *Könige*, 481; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 329.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kgs. 25:27; Jer. 52:31 has it two days earlier. This would have been April 2, or March 31 of the year 561 BCE; see R. A. Parker, W. H. Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C. – A.D. 76*, Providence 1956, 28; M. Weippert, ‘Israel und Juda’, in: *RIA* 5, 206;

New Year in the reign of Evil-Merodach. I will not enter into a discussion on the function and meaning of the *Akitu* festival or on the religious implications of a *Thronbesteigungsfest*.<sup>20</sup> I will only point to the fact that the turn of the year was an opportunity for Babylonian kings to rearrange the officialdom. Next to that the accession to the throne and especially the first New Year in a Kings' reign was an occasion on which judicial sentences could be changed dramatically. In the next section I will discuss several pieces of evidence from the Ancient Near East that point at the custom of amnesty at the occasion of an accession to the throne. It should be noted that there is no direct evidence for such an amnesty. The texts related to the *Akitu* festival and those describing the accession to the throne of a new king, do not contain allusions to acts of amnesty. This implies that the evidence is circumstantial.

### 2.5.1. Mari

In the ancient city of Mari, prisoners were released on the occasion of a ceremony. The character of this ceremony is unknown.<sup>21</sup> Two letters from Mari give report of the release of captured women.<sup>22</sup> The occasion for these releases is unknown.

### 2.5.2. Hemerologies

Hemerologies are almanac-like texts that inform about the yearly cycle of *dies fas et nefas* and hint at correct human conduct during those days. Assyrian hemerologies order amnesty on the occasion of the *šigû* ritual. The *šigû* ritual has been a religious lament containing cries for pity. During the ages they were increasingly restricted to royal usage. The ritual laments were often accompanied by the release of a person held in fetters or the freeing of a slave.<sup>23</sup>

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G. Larsson, 'Chronology as a Structural Element in the Old Testament', *SJOT* 14 (2000), 207-18.

<sup>20</sup> See J. A. Black, 'The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon. "Taking Bel by the Hand" and a Cultic Picnic', *Religion* 11 (1981), 39-59; K. van der Toorn, 'The Babylonian New Year Festival: New Insights from the Cuneiform Texts and their Bearing on Old Testament Study', in: J. A. Emerton (ed.), *Congress Volume: Leuven 1989* (VT Sup 43), Leiden 1991, 331-39; B. Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi ĩrub. Die kulttopographische und ideologische Programmatik der Akītu-Prozession in Babylonien und Assyrien im 1. Jahrtausend vor Chr.*, Mainz 1994; M. Hutter, *Religionen in der Umwelt des Alten Testaments I. Babylonier, Syrer, Perser* (KST 4,1), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1996, 74-80.

<sup>21</sup> G. Dossin, 'Un rituel du culte d'Ištar provenant de Mari', *RA* 35 (1938), 1-13, Col. II :24-27.

<sup>22</sup> *ARM* XXIII, 76 and 421; see also Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37-52, 535.

<sup>23</sup> R. Labat, *Hémérologies et ménologies d'Assur*, Paris 1915; M.-J. Seux, 'Šiggajôn = šigû?', in: A. Caquot, M. Delcor (eds.), *Mélanges bibliques et orientaux* (FS H. Ca-

### 2.5.3. The petition of Adad-šumu-ušur

In the first month of the regnal year of Ashurbanipal that started in spring 666 BCE, the exorcist Adad-šumu-ušur wrote a petition to the king.<sup>24</sup> Adad-šumu-ušur had been the personal exorcist and close confidant of Esarhaddon, but it seems that he had fallen out of grace in the course of Ashurbanipal's succession to the throne. His petition to the king is a masterpiece of diplomacy. Adad-šumu-ušur starts to picture the *aurea aetas* in the beginning of Ashurbanipal's reign. In florid language that implicitly refers to Ashurbanipal's coronation hymn,<sup>25</sup> he describes the good reign of the new king under divine benevolence: The economy is flourishing, people sing and dance of joy, the sick were healed and the one who had been condemned to death has been revived:

The king, my lord, has revived the one who was guilty and condemned to death. You have released the one who was imprisoned for many [y]ears.<sup>26</sup>

Then he moves from the general to the specific. He pleads for himself and his son Urad-Gula, on the basis of Ashurbanipal's righteousness, hoping that he and his son will be restored in the entourage of the king.<sup>27</sup> A few other texts contain the theme of 'release' but are not directly related to a ritual or a festival.<sup>28</sup>

### 2.5.4. Egypt

The Egyptian king Ramses IV narrates that on the occasion of his accession to the throne, he exercised the right of amnesty. Whether this is an

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zelles; AOAT 212), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1981, 419-38; K. van der Toorn, *Sin and Sanctification in Israel and Mesopotamia* (SSN 22), Assen, Maastricht 1985, 117-21; Hutter, *Religionen in der Umwelt des Alten Testaments*, 94.

<sup>24</sup> K. 183 = ABL 2 = LAS 121 = SAA 10, 226; see K. H. Deller, 'Die Briefe des Adad-šumu-ušur', in: M. Dietrich, W. Röllig (eds.), *lišān mithurti* (FS W. von Soden; AOAT 1), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1969, 45-64; Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars* II, 104.

<sup>25</sup> LKA 31 = SAA 3,11; see M. Arneth, "Sonnen der Gerechtigkeit". *Studien zur Solarisierung der Jahwe-Religion im Lichte von Psalm 72* (BZAR 1), Wiesbaden 2000, esp. 61-62, 72.

<sup>26</sup> SAA 10, 226:21-24; according to Parpola, *Letters from Assyrian Scholars* II, 104, the amnesty referred to might have been part of measures taken on the occasion of Ashurbanipal's accession to the throne.

<sup>27</sup> A comparable pattern, but without a reference to amnesty, is present in the petition K. 1201 = ABL 620 = SAA 16, 36. Deller, 'Briefe des Adad-šumu-ušur', 58, assigned this petition to Adad-šumu-ušur; M. Luukko, G. van Buylaere, *The Political Correspondence of Esarhaddon* (SAA 16), 34, however, doubt this assignment on the basis of the spelling of *šum-ma* and *mu-ku*.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., KAR 321:1; STT 87:17-27//STT 371:1-9 = SAA 3, 10:17-27.

historical fact or a token of propaganda can be debated. The institution as such was known, though.<sup>29</sup>

#### 2.5.5. Hebrew Bible

In the Hebrew Bible, glimpses of the institution are visible. Gen. 40:20 reflects an act of amnesty on the birthday of a nameless Pharaoh. The ironical questions to the king of Babylon in Isa. 14:17-18 imply that, at least from a Judahite perspective, a right-minded Babylonian king ought to release prisoners of war.<sup>30</sup> Divine acts of amnesty are present in texts such as Isa. 58:3-6; 61:1; Psalm 68:7.

#### 2.5.6. Enuma Eliš

A passage in the Babylonian epic of creation, Enuma Eliš, makes it plausible that the idea of amnesty can be transferred to the historical reality of the first *Akitu* festival of a new Babylonian king. Just after the creation of mankind, Marduk pardoned those gods who had rebelled against him in his struggle with Tiamat and who were destined to serve the great gods: "He imposed the *dullu*-duties of the gods (upon mankind) and set the gods free".<sup>31</sup> As is well known the Epic of Creation was recited on the fourth day of the *Akitu* festival. This implies that Enuma Eliš not only was a tale on the beginning of the universe and the 'history' but contains also royal ideology.<sup>32</sup> In my opinion a parallel can be drawn. Just as Marduk gave amnesty to his former enemies, a righteous Babylonian king should release his imprisoned enemies. The theme from the tale needed to be played out in reality.

<sup>29</sup> See A. Théodoridés, 'Freiheit', *LdÄ* 2, 301; J. von Beckerath, 'Amnestie', *LdÄ* 1, 224-25.

<sup>30</sup> See K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (AOAT 219), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1986, 213-27.

<sup>31</sup> Enuma Eliš VI:34; see the classroom edition of W. G. Lambert, S. B. Parker, *Enuma Eliš: The Babylonian Epic of Creation*, Oxford 1966. Pace A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, Chicago-London 1972, 47, I construe Marduk as the subject of the verbs in the pertinent clauses, see also Th. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*, New Haven-London 1976, 180, 186, and the introduction to the speech of the released gods to Marduk their liberator in Enuma Eliš VI:49: "Now, o Lord, who has established our freedom from compulsory service ...".

<sup>32</sup> See Jacobsen, *Treasures*, 165-91; J. Bottéro, 'L'épopée de la création ou les hauts faits de Marduk et son sacre', in: J. Bottéro (ed.), *Mythes et rites de Babylone*, Paris 1985, 113-62.

### 2.5.7. In sum

The institution of amnesty is known in the Ancient Near East. The idea of humane treatment being connected to the *Akitu* festival supplies an interesting religious background to the release of Jehoiachin as well as an argument for the historical reliability of the report in 2 Kgs. 25:27-30.<sup>33</sup>

## 3. Historical plausibility

### 3.1. Historicity questioned

The historicity of the report has been questioned without any real argument.<sup>34</sup> I hope to show that there is no need for doubt.

### 3.2. Assignment lists

As has been generally noted,<sup>35</sup> the historicity of Jehoiachin's release cannot be confirmed by the Babylonian assignment lists edited by Weidner.<sup>36</sup> These documents list [*Ia*]-*'ú-kinu/Ia-ku-ú-ki-nu* = \**Yahu-kin*<sup>37</sup>, his five sons and a few other Judaeans as recipients of food distributed by the king.

<sup>33</sup> See also G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah* (SHCANE 9), Leiden 1996, 117-18, who connects the release of Jehoiachin with the context of a *duraru* proclaimed close to the coronation of Evil-Merodakh; Na'aman, *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors*, 406-07.

<sup>34</sup> E.g., by R. P. Carroll, *Jeremiah: A Commentary* (OTL), London 1986, 870-74; J. Pakkala, 'Zedekiah's Fate and the Dynastic Succession', *JBL* 125 (2006), 451.

<sup>35</sup> See Würthwein, *Könige*, 472-73; H. Donner, *Geschichte des Volkes Israels und seine Nachbarn in Grundzügen* (GAT 4/1-2), Göttingen 1986, 374; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 329; Barstad, *Myth of the Empty Land*, 62-63; D. S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (HSM 58), Atlanta 1999, 97; Gerhards, 'Begnadigung Jojachins'; G. Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52* (HThKAT), Freiburg-Basel-Wien 2005, 655-56; pace J. A. Montgomery, H. S. Gehman, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Kings* (ICC), Edinburgh 1951, 555, 566; R.H. Sack, *Amel-Marduk 562-560 B.C.* (AOATS 4), Neukirchen-Vluyn 1972, 29; J. Gray, *I & II Kings* (OTL), London 1977, 774.

<sup>36</sup> E. F. Weidner, 'Jojachin, König von Juda in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten', in: *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud* 2, Paris 1939, 923-35; see also R. Zadok, *The Jews of Babylonia during the Chaldean and Achaemenian Periods According to the Babylonian Sources* (Studies in the History of the Jewish People and the Land of Israel 3) Haifa 1979, 38-40; R. Albertz, *Die Exilszeit: 6. Jahrhundert v. Chr.* (BibEnz 7), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 2001, 67, 87; Gerhards, 'Begnadigung Jojachins', 64-66; E. Yamauchi, 'The Eastern Jewish Diaspora under the Babylonians', in: M. W. Chavalas, L. K. Younger (eds.), *Mesopotamia and the Bible: Comparative Explorations*, Grand Rapids 2002, 360-61; L. J. Mykytiuk, *Identifying Biblical Persons in Northwest Semitic Inscriptions of 1200-539 B.C.E.* (SBL Academia Biblica 12), Atlanta 2004, 157 n. 20.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Zadok, *Jews*, 19-20.

These assignment lists stem from the thirteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, which was 592 BCE. These documents only show that Jehoiachin was provided in his subsistence by the Babylonian court during his imprisonment and that the Babylonians apparently took over the custom known from Assyrian inscriptions that prisoners had a right to live and that they received dietary and even wives.<sup>38</sup> The historical plausibility of Jehoiachin's amnesty can be proved, I think, by looking at the following features.

### 3.3. The thirty-seventh year

According to 2 Kgs. 25:27, the release took place in the thirty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin. The Babylonian Chronicle BM 21946 Rev. 11-13 narrates that Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar II in his seventh regnal year (spring 598 – spring 597 BCE):

- 11 The seventh year:  
In the months Kislev the king of Akkad mustered his army and marched to Hattu.
- 12 He campaigned ag[ainst] the city of Judah and on the second day of the month Adar he captured the city and seized the king.
- 13 A king of his own [choice] he appointed in the city.  
He took a vast tribute and took it to Babylon.<sup>39</sup>

As has generally been accepted the two Judaeans referred to in this inscription are Jehoiachin and Zedekiah. This historical note connects the first year of Jehoiachin's imprisonment with Nebuchadnezzar's seventh regnal year in the Babylonian system of counting years. As is known from the Uruk king-list, Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 43 years:

7' 43 [ye]ars: Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See on this H. W. F. Saggs, 'Assyrian Prisoners of War and the Right to Live', in: H. Hirsch, H. Hunger (eds.), *Vorträge gehalten auf der 28. Rencontre Assyriologique in Wien 6.-10. Juli 1981* (AfO Beiheft 19), Horn 1982, 85-93.

<sup>39</sup> BM 21946 = Babylonian Chronicle V; ed. D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of the Chaldaean Kings*, London 1956, 66-75 with Pl. v, XIV-XVI; *COS* I, 467-68; J.-J. Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (SBL WAW 19), Atlanta 2004, 230-31; see A. K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (TCS 5), Locust Valley 1975, 87, 99-102; see J. A. Brinkman, 'The Babylonian Chronicle Revisited', in: T. Abusch *et al.* (eds.), *Lingering over Words: Studies in Ancient Near Eastern Literature in Honor of William L. Moran* (HSS 37), Atlanta 1990, 73-104; Barstad, *Myth of the Empty Land*, 61-63; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 71. Note that in 2 Kgs. 24:12 the capture is dated in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar. The difference 'seventh' - 'eighth' can be explained either by assuming ante-dating in the Book of Kings, or by supposing an autumn year system in this portion of Kings.



Jehoiachin had been on the throne in Jerusalem for three months during Nebuchadnezzar's seventh regnal year. This implies the following reconstruction of synchronisms (all within the Babylonian system of counting years):

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{A) } \text{Nebu } 7^{41} & = & \text{Jeho Capt } 1 \quad [\text{Spring } 598\text{-}597]^{42} \\
 & & 36 \\
 & \text{-----} & + \\
 \text{B) } \text{Nebu } 43^{43} & = & \text{Jeho Capt } 37 \quad [\text{Spring } 562\text{-}561]^{44}
 \end{array}$$

Nebuchadnezzar's 43<sup>rd</sup> year was the accession year of his son Evil-Merodach. By implication, Evil-Merodach's accession year equal the 37<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoiachin's captivity. 2 Kgs. 25:27 mentions that the amnesty took place *bišnat malkô*. This Hebrew expression can only refer to: "the period preceding the first full regnal year of a king". The expression stands parallel to *r'šyt mmlkt* and both are equivalent to the Akkadian *rēš šarruti*.<sup>45</sup> This reconstruction underscores the plausibility of a release of Jehoiachin in spring 561.

### 3.4. Babylonian attitude towards exiled Tyrians

In this context it is worth noting a historical conclusion that Joannes drew from his analysis of a cuneiform archive from ancient *šurru* (Tyre). Tyre here does not refer to a city on the Phoenician coast, but to a colony for Phoenician deportees in the vicinity of Nippur.<sup>46</sup> Joannes discusses twelve

<sup>40</sup> Uruk king-list: 7'; J. J. A. van Dijk, in: H. Lenzen (ed.), *Vorläufiger Bericht über die Ausgrabung von Uruk-Warka* 17, Berlin 1956, 53-60 with Pl. 28a. See Grayson, *Chronicles*, 268, 295; A. K. Grayson, 'Königsliste und Chroniken', in: *RIA* 6, 97; see also the Ptolemaic Canon:17.

<sup>41</sup> Babylonian counting.

<sup>42</sup> See Parker, Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 27; C. Hardmeier, *Prophetie im Streit vor dem Untergang Judas: Erzählkommunikative Studien zur Entstehungssituation der Jesaja und Jeremiaerzählungen in II Reg 18-20 und Jer 37-40* (BZAW 187), Berlin-New York 1990, 247-51.

<sup>43</sup> Babylonian counting.

<sup>44</sup> See Parker, Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 28; Galil, *Chronology*, 117-18.

<sup>45</sup> For this interpretation of *bišnat malkô* see Montgomery, Gehman, *Kings*, 556; Cogan, Tadmor, *II Kings*, 328; Spronk, 'Aanhangsel of uitvloeisel', 166; Galil, *Chronology*, 117; *pace* Zenger, 'Rehabilitierung', 19-20 (with lit.); H. A. Brongers, *II Koningen* (POT), Nijkerk 1970, 240; Gerhards, 'Begnadigung Jojachins', 52; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37-52, 535.

<sup>46</sup> Evidence is now available for communities in Babylonia of exiled people from, e.g., Ashkelon, Gaza, Judah, Neirab, Qadeš, Qedar and Tyre; see F. Joannes, A. Lemaire, 'Trois tablettes cunéiformes à onomastique ouest-sémitique', *Transeuphratène* 17 (1999), 24.

texts mentioning *šurru*. The pertinent archive is dated by its colophons to between the years 31 and 42 of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. Tyre was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar in his 32<sup>nd</sup> year. After Nebuchadnezzar's 42<sup>nd</sup> year, the colony Tyre is never mentioned again. According to Joannes the sudden end of the archive should be connected to the change in rule in Babylonia after the death of Nebuchadnezzar and by the contemporary modification in the political system in the Tyrian homeland by the installation of the government of the 'judges' (*suffetes*). In his opinion, the assumed return of the Tyrian exiles that once lived in *šurru* was one of the measures taken by Evil-Merodach on the occasion of the accession of this Babylonian king.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.5. Conclusion

The evidence available makes it plausible that Evil-Merodach released the exiled Judaeon king Jehoiachin in spring 561 BCE only a few days before the first New Year in his reign. The reason why Jehoiachin was granted amnesty, is buried in history, as is the reason why the exiled Tyrians returned home while the Judaeans had to stay in exile. These observations make the report in 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 historically reliable.

### 4. *Salvation for Israel?*

The report on the amnesty granted to Jehoiachin forms the last remark in the Book of Kings. It is also the closing remark of the Deuteronomistic History and of the Book of Jeremiah, where it had been adopted with some slight changes from the Book of Kings. As to the interpretation of this feature, two interrelated questions are of importance:

1. To which redactional layer do the last four verses in the Book of Kings belong?
2. What is the theological significance of the report on the amnesty for Jehoiachin?

The answer to the first question is connected with one's overall view on the emergence of the Book of Kings or of the Deuteronomistic History. The report cannot have been written by a pre-exilic editor or redactor. The fact that he wrote after the fall of Jerusalem is seemingly beyond debate. The absence of a reference to the return from exile, makes it plausible that this author wrote his remark before the end of the exile. It stands to reason that this final remark was written by the final redactor of the Book of Kings.

<sup>47</sup> F. Joannes, 'Trois textes de *šurru* à l'époque néo-babylonienne', *RA* 81 (1987), 147-58; see also Vanderhooft, *Neo-Babylonian Empire*, 99-101; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 95.

With which exilic writer can the author of 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 be equated? Dtr2?<sup>48</sup> RIII?<sup>49</sup> DtrH?<sup>50</sup> DtrP?<sup>51</sup> A post-Dtr edition?<sup>52</sup> Or the final redactor of the complex Gen. 2:4 – 2 Kgs. 25:30?<sup>53</sup> Since the textual unit is too short for a significant analysis of words and idiom, no literary base for a redaction-historical decision is available. Research into the theological concepts might help.

#### 4.1. Two views on the significance of 2 Kings 25:27-30

On the theological purpose of the last four verses of Kings there exist, in the main, two interpretations:

1. Martin Noth, and others, holds a minimal position. 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 is nothing more than an accidental final notice without any theological value seemingly indicating that Israel's history was over.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> F. M. Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, Cambridge 1973; R. D. Nelson, *The Double Redaction of the Deuteronomistic History* (JSOT Sup 18), Sheffield 1981, 85-90; Gerhards, 'Begnädigung Jojachins'; M. Gerhards, 'Die beiden Erzählungen aus 2. Kön. 20 und 2. Kön. 20, 18 als Ankündigung der Begnadigung Jojachins (2. Kön. 25,27-30)', *BN* 98 (1999), 5.

<sup>49</sup> H. Weippert, 'Die "deuteronomistischen" Beurteilungen der Könige von Israel und Juda und das Problem der Redaktion der Königsbücher', *Bib* 53 (1972), 301-39.

<sup>50</sup> Pakkala, 'Zedekiah's Fate'.

<sup>51</sup> W. Dietrich, *Prophetie und Geschichte: Eine redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zum deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerk* (FRLANT 108), Göttingen 1972, 139-43; later Dietrich assigned 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 to DtrH, W. Dietrich, 'Niedergang und Neuanfang: Die Haltung der Schlussredaktion des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes zu den wichtigsten Fragen ihrer Zeit', in: B. Becking, M.C.A. Korpel (eds.), *The Crisis of the Israelite Religion: Transformation of Religious Traditions in Exilic and Post-Exilic Times* (OTS 42), Leiden 1999, 67.

<sup>52</sup> S. L. McKenzie, *The Trouble with Kings: The Composition of the Book of Kings in the Deuteronomistic History* (VT Sup 42), Leiden 1991, 136-37, 52; Th. C. Römer, *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical and Literary Introduction*, London-New York 2005; Th. Römer, 'Entstehungsphasen des "deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes"', in: M. Witte et al. (eds.), *Die deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerke: Redaktions- und religionsgeschichtliche Perspektiven zur „Deuteronomismus“-Diskussion in Tora und Vorderen Propheten* (BZAW 365), Berlin-New York 2006, 45-70; J. C. Geoghegan, *The Time, Place, and Purpose of the Deuteronomistic History: The Evidence of "Until This Day"* (Brown Judaic Studies 347), Providence 2006, 161 n. 52.

<sup>53</sup> M. Nobile, 'Un contributo alla lettura sincronica della redazione Genesi-2 Re, sulla la basa del filo narrativo da 2 Re 25, 27-20', *Antonianum* 61 (1986), 207-24; S. Boorer, 'The Importance of a Diachronic Approach: The Case of Genesis – Kings', *CBQ* 51 (1989), 195-208; D. N. Freedman, B. Kelly, 'Who Redacted the Primary History?', in: C. Cohen, A. Hurvitz, S. M. Paul (eds.), *Sefer Moshe: The Moshe Weinfield Jubilee Volume*, Winona Lake 2004, 39-41; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 537-38.

<sup>54</sup> M. Noth, *Überlieferungsgeschichtliche Studien: Die sammelnden und bearbeitenden Geschichtswerke im Alten Testament*, Tübingen 1943, 12, 108; see also Cross, *Canaan-*

2. Gerhard von Rad has given a maximal interpretation. In his opinion, Jehoiachin's release is an almost Messianic sign of hope in the darkness of the exile and should be construed as in line with the promise by Nathan of an everlasting Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem (2 Sam. 7).<sup>55</sup>

Noth's position is weak since he has to account for the fact that the author of the Book of Kings would have included some haphazard notes in his otherwise thorough composition. Von Rad's view is based on an obvious over-interpretation of the report.<sup>56</sup>

#### 4.2. A mediating position

My own perception of the text yields an affirmation of the mediating positions of Christopher T. Begg<sup>57</sup>, Thomas L. Thompson<sup>58</sup> and Thomas C. Römer.<sup>59</sup> Very important, in my view, are aspects that are not mentioned in the text:

1. God, יהוה, is not portrayed as the protagonist of the release. As Begg has noticed, the Deuteronomistic author could have phrased these verses in a different way if his purpose was to attribute Jehoiachin's release to YHWH's initiative.<sup>60</sup> Quite the contrary is observable: There is a pro-

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nite Myth, 277; Gray, *Kings*, 773; Würthwein, *Könige*, 484; Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 91; Freedman, Kelly, 'Who Redacted the Primary History?', 39-41.

<sup>55</sup> G. von Rad, *Deuteronomium-Studien*, Göttingen 1947, 63-64; G. von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testaments. Band I: Die Theologie der geschichtlichen Überlieferungen Israels* (6. Auflage), München 1969, 355; see also Zenger, 'Rehabilitierung', 16-30; Dietrich, *Prophezie und Geschichte*, 142; E. Cortese, 'Lo schema deuteronomistico per i re de Giuda e d'Israele', *Bibl* 56 (1975), 47; H. D. Preuss, *Theologie des Alten Testaments* 2, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln 1991, 28-29; I. W. Provan, 'The Messiah in the Book of Kings', in: P. E. Satterthwaite, R. S. Hess (eds.), *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts*, Carlisle, Grand Rapids 1995, 71-76; Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 99, 119-20; R. Albertz, 'Wer waren die Deuteronomisten? Das historische Rätsel einer literarischen Hypothese', *EvTh* 57 (1997) 319-38; R. D. Nelson, *The Historical Books*, Nashville 1998, 147-48; R. F. Person, *The Deuteronomistic School: History, Social Setting, and Literature*, Atlanta 2002 119-20 (but referring to the times of Zerubbabel).

<sup>56</sup> The attempt by J. J. Granowski, 'Jehoiachin at the King's Table: A Reading of the Ending of the Second Book of Kings', in: D. N. Fewell (ed.), *Reading Between Texts*, Louisville 1992, 173-88, who wants to keep together both views by stating that pessimism coexists with optimism, is not very successful.

<sup>57</sup> Begg, 'Significance of Jehoiachin's Release'; Gerhards, 'Begnädigung Jojachins'; Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52*, 656-57; Na'aman, *Ancient Israel and Its Neighbors*, 406-07.

<sup>58</sup> T. L. Thompson, *The Bible in History: How Writers Create a Past*, London 1999, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Römer, *So-called Deuteronomistic History*, 177.

<sup>60</sup> See Begg, 'Significance of Jehoiachin's Release', 50; Murray, 'Jehoiachin in Babylon', 252-56.

Babylonian stand in the present wording of these clauses. Evil-Merodach is the main subject of almost all the clauses.<sup>61</sup>

2. There is *no* return from exile.<sup>62</sup> The only 'positive' thing that is narrated is the shift of Jehoiachin from the *ergastulum* under the palace to the table room in the palace.<sup>63</sup> Besides, the *šurru* archive may indicate that return from exile was a real option, even in pre-Achaemenid times.
3. Jehoiachin's release was – at the most – a matter of personal liberation. The act of amnesty had *no* consequences for the people as a whole. His amnesty did not imply salvation for his people.

These observations imply, that 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 cannot be construed as an almost Messianic sign of hope, nor as haphazard remark. It should be read as an indication that life went on in exile and that the impetus for a return from exile is not to be awaited from a Babylonian king. Next to that it should be noted that in 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 no mention is made of the offspring of Jehoiachin.<sup>64</sup> This absence of a son or a heir to Jehoiachin makes a 'messianic' interpretation not very plausible, especially in light of the presence of his offspring in 1 Chron. 3:17-18 and in the Babylonian assignment lists mentioned above.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.3. The intention of the incident

These remarks bring me to my final question. Why then does the Book of Kings end with this report on a partial and restricted deliverance? The significance of this closing unit seems to be as follows. This kind of release is *not* the way out of the exile. For a return, more is needed.<sup>66</sup> This obser-

<sup>61</sup> See M. Nobile, 'Un Contributo alla lettura sincronica della redazione Genesi-2 Re', 207-24; C. T. Begg, 'The Interpretation of the Gedalajah Episode (2 Kgs 25,22-26) in Context', *Antonianum* 62 (1987), 3-11; C. R. Seitz, *Theology in Conflict: Reactions to the Exile in the Book of Jeremiah* (BZAW 176), Berlin-New York 1989, 215-22; Thompson, *The Bible in History*, 30.

<sup>62</sup> H. N. Rösel, *Von Josua bis Jojachin: Untersuchungen zu den deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbüchern des Alten Testaments* (VT Sup 75), Leiden 1999, 34; Lundbom, *Jeremiah 37-52*, 538.

<sup>63</sup> See Weinfeld, 'Counsel of the "Elders"', 53; Würthwein, *Könige*, 481; K. van der Toorn, 'Judges xvi 21 in the light of Akkadian sources', *VT* 36 (1986), 248-53; Gerhards, 'Die beiden Erzählungen', 5; the Hebrew expression בֵּית כְּלִי is to be construed as a Babylonian loanword: *bît kili*, 'prison; house of confinement'; see Albertz, *Exilszeit*, 90.

<sup>64</sup> This absence is a weak point in the proposal of Pakkala, 'Zedekiah's Fate', 452, who assumes that the fates of Zedekiah and Jehojachin are narrated in juxtaposition by DtrH in 'the context where two dynastic lines could justify their legitimacy'.

<sup>65</sup> See Murray, 'Jehoiachin in Babylon', 262-63.

<sup>66</sup> See also W. Zimmerli, *Grundriss der alttestamentlichen Theologie*, Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1972, 158-59; Tadmor, Cogan, *II Kings*, 330; Seitz, *Theology in Conflict*, 222; Römer, *So-called Deuteronomistic History*, 177.

vation has to be connected with a few texts in then Book of Jeremiah and with the remarks of Hans Walter Wolff on the 'kerygma' of the Deuteronomistic History.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4.3.1. Expectations of hope in the Book of Jeremiah

In the Book of Jeremiah traces of hope are present that were living in certain circles in Jerusalem. They hoped that YHWH would restore the Davidic dynasty by the release of Jehoiachin and the return from exile of both king and people. In Jer. 28:3-11, this hope is uttered by Hananiah. The Book of Jeremiah presents this hope as based on false and illusionary prophecy. Whether these words belong to the *ipsisimma voces* of Hananiah or were phrased by a later redactor<sup>68</sup>, the ideology is clear. The events in the last days of the accession year of Evil-Merodach do not bring this hope to a fulfillment.

#### 4.3.2. Summons to turn

According to Wolff, it belonged to the 'kerygma' of the Deuteronomistic History, that even during the exilic period there was hope for the people of God, but only when they would be willing to convert and show repentance.<sup>69</sup> Jehoiachin's release being without conversion and not leading to the return of the people to Judah, emphasizes from the negative point of view the need of conversion for the continuation of the history of God with Israel and as such is an organic part of the Deuteronomistic History or at least of the *šûb*-redaction referred to by Diepold.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> H. W. Wolff, 'Das Kerygma des deuteronomistischen Geschichtswerkes', *ZAW* 73 (1961), 171-86; see also J. Schipper, "Significant Resonances" with Mephibosheth in 2 Kings 25:27-30: A Response to Donald F. Murray', *JBL* 124 (2005), 521-29.

<sup>68</sup> Thus Zenger, 'Rehabilitierung', 16; Carroll, *Jeremiah*, 537-50.

<sup>69</sup> Wolff, 'Kerygma'; Levenson, 'Last Four Verses'; M. Rose, 'Deuteronomistic Ideology and Theology of the Old Testament', in: A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOT Sup 306), Sheffield 2000, 424-55; Murray, 'Jehoiachin in Babylon'; Freedman, Kelly, 'Who Redacted the Primary History?', 39-47.

<sup>70</sup> P. Diepold, *Israels Land* (BWANT V/15), Stuttgart-Berlin-Köln-Mainz 1972, 22-28, 147-50, 204-09; J. D. Levenson, 'Who Inserted the Book of the Torah?', *HTHR* 68 (1975), 203-34. In my opinion it is not impossible to equate this *šûb* redaction with Nelson's exilic Dtr2, see Nelson, *Double Redaction*, or with the RIII redactor in the concept of Weippert, 'Deuteronomistische Beurteilungen'; see also A. D. H. Mayes, *The Story of Israel Between Settlement and Exile: A Redactional Study of the Deuteronomistic History*, London 1983, 123-25; Lundbom, *Jeremiah* 37-52, 537-38.

### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, 2 Kgs. 25:27-30 are neither an accidental appendix nor the expected outcome of the Deuteronomistic History, but a remark on an unexpected, but restricted release, which can be interpreted in terms of one of the main themes of this greater history writing. The amnesty granted to the former Judaeen king as such is no salvation for the exiled community. I do agree with Nelson, when he concludes on the theology of the exilic deuteronomist: "Salvation ... does not rest in false hopes of a Davidic restoration (2 Kgs. 25:27-30) but in an acceptance of the justice of Yahweh's punishment and in repentance ...".<sup>71</sup> I interpret Nelson's nouns 'acceptance' and 'repentance' as the root for a turn and I know that YHWH chose his own way for the salvation of his people as becomes clear from the preaching of Deutero-Isaiah or the stories in the Book of Ezra.<sup>72</sup> By implication, I see no reason to transport the final four verses of the Book of Kings to the beginning of the Prophetic Books in the Hebrew Canon. Next to the fact that there is no written evidence for such a view, the final verses of the Book of Kings are part of a narrative, a genre that is absent at the beginning of Isaiah.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Nelson, *Double Redaction*, 123.

<sup>72</sup> On the historical problems with the concept of an immediate and massive return from Exile see B. Becking, "'We all returned as One': Critical Notes on The Myth of the Mass Return", in: O. Lipschits, M. Oeming (eds.), *Judah and the Judaeans in the Persian Period*, Winona Lake 2006, 3-18.

<sup>73</sup> Pace E. A. Knauf, 'Does "Deuteronomistic Historiography" (DtrH) Exist?', in: A. de Pury, T. Römer, J.-D. Macchi (eds.), *Israel Constructs its History: Deuteronomistic Historiography in Recent Research* (JSOT Sup 306), Sheffield 2000, 397.





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*Eine wichtige  
Dokumentation  
zu Göttinnen  
im Raum  
Palästina / Israel*

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## **Eva – Mutter alles Lebendigen**

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Eva ist in der Bibel die erste Menschenfrau. Der Titel «Mutter alles Lebendigen», den sie erhält, passt aber besser zu einer Göttin. Nicht nur hier, auch bei den bildlichen Darstellungen ist die Grenze zwischen Frau und Göttin oft unscharf. Das reich und farbig illustrierte Buch präsentiert erstmals alle im Alten Orient und besonders in Palästina/Israel in biblischer Zeit verbreiteten göttlichen Frauentypen, die bald als Mütter alles Lebendigen Pflanzen, Tiere und Menschen hervorbringen, bald als jungfräuliche kämpferische Patroninnen der Kultur auftreten, in beiden Fällen aber fast immer stark erotische Züge aufweisen. Das Buch präsentiert die Entwicklung vom Neolithikum bis in die spätrömische Zeit anhand prächtiger Abbildungen von Steinskulpturen, Malereien, Terrakotten, Bronzen, Elfenbeinen, Rollsiegeln, Skarabäen und Münzen.

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## *Summary*

The ten essays in this volume all deal with various aspects of the interpretation of the Book of Kings. The author tries to set a course between Scylla and Charibdis. Both «minimalism» and «maximalism» are avoided by trying to apply a variety of methods: narratology, historical criticism and theological analysis. This implies that extra-biblical evidence – the Tell Dan inscription, Assyrian royal inscriptions, West Semitic seal inscriptions – are taken into account.

Selected texts from this biblical book are read on the basis of a three-dimensional matrix: (1) the narrative character of the story/stories; (2) the value and function of extra-biblical material, be it of an epigraphical or an archaeological character; (3) the art of history-writing both ancient and modern. The essays are arranged according to the order in which the relevant texts or their main characters figure in the Book of Kings. Originally published between 1987 and 2005, they have been updated for publication in the present collection.

In «Is the Book of Kings a Hellenistic Book?» arguments are collected against the view that the Book of Kings was written in a late period. A dating of the book in exilic or early post-exilic times better fits the evidence.

«Elijah at Mount Horeb: Reading 1 Kings 19:9-18» takes its starting point in the repetition of the dialogue between God and prophet in 9b-10 and 13b-14. This repetition is not construed as a literary-critical device, but as the indication of retrospective achrony. The forces of nature in which God was absent are interpreted as counterparts to elements in the preceding story of 1 Kings 18. «No More Grapes from the Vineyard? A Plea for a Historical Critical Approach in the Study of the Old Testament» presents various arguments for the continuation of a historical reading of ancient texts. The story in 1 Kings 21 is read as a commentary on societal and economic changes that were caused by the transition from a tribal to a tributary system.

The question «Did Jehu Write the Tel Dan Inscription?» is answered negatively. In ««Touch for Health ...» Magic in 2 Kings 4:31-37 with a Remark on the History of Yahwism», the acts of Elisha on a dead boy are compared with Mesopotamian material, mainly of a magical character. The comparison leads to the conviction that in an early stage of Yahwism, the Israelite deity was seen as active in magical acts.

«From Exodus to Exile: 2 Kings 17:7-20 in the Context of its Co-Text» opts for the literary unity of the pericope under consideration. Arguments are collected for the view that this Deuteronomistic peroration contains the evaluation both of the fall of Samaria and the sack of Jerusalem. «From Apostasy to Destruction: 2 Kings 17,21-23: A Josianic View on the Fall of Samaria» is a different evaluation of the fall of Samaria. This textual unit is written in more antagonistic mood (North versus South; David versus Jeroboam) and can be taken as part of a pre-exilic redaction. The essay «Chronology: A Skeleton without Flesh? Sennacherib's Campaign as a Case-Study» discusses the quest for objective history writing that can be reached only at the level of mere fact and figures. A more narrative representation of the past will always be the product of the mind of the historian. Eventually, an inter-subjective dialogue can be undertaken.

In «Gedaliah and Baalis in History and as Tradition: Remarks on 2 Kings 25:22-26, Jeremiah 40:7-41:15, and Two Ammonite Seal-Inscriptions» the question is discussed whether or not a History of Israel can be written. What role would the Hebrew Bible play in such an enterprise? Seal inscriptions containing names that are present in the biblical story may be of help, but «names are not a story», i. e. the presence of a biblical character in the prosopography of Ancient Israel does not lead automatically to the conclusion that the stories on that character are historically trustworthy. «Jehojachin's Amnesty, Salvation for Israel? Notes on 2 Kings 25:27-30» deals with the last four verses of the Book of Kings. These verses are neither a haphazard remark nor a semi-messianic sign of hope, but an indication that a way out of the exile will be more complicated.